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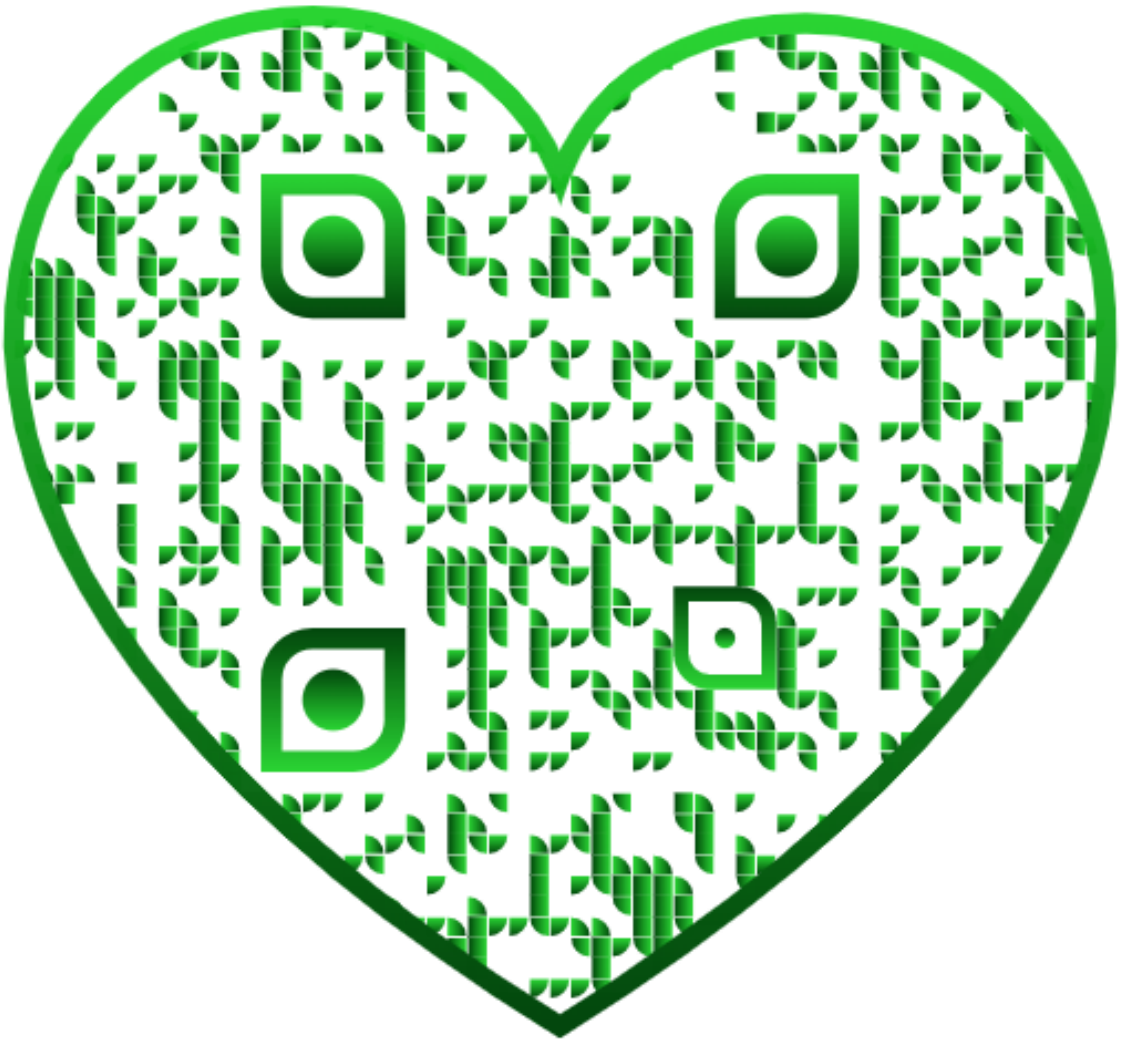
# WHO IS WHO IN hindu mythology

A COMPREHENSIVE COLLECTION OF STORIES FROM THE PURĀṆAS

VOL 2

Surya N. Maruvada



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**VOL 2**

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# Foreword

*Sanātana Dharma* (popularly known as the *Hindu* philosophy) has a rich repertoire of sacred texts which have been transmitted from generation to generation by oral tradition. The corpus comprises *Śruṭis*, *Smṛṭis*, *Purāṇās* and *Itihāsas*. While the *Śruṭis* are the original fonts of revealed wisdom, the other three are highly interlinked—or *hyperlinked* with allusions to concepts, definitions and events from others providing the context. Quite often, in order to understand the concepts and contexts of the events described in one or the other of them, it is necessary to follow the *hyperlinks* to other sources including the *Śruṭis*.

The rendition of the *Vēdās* requires not only rigid conformity to the texts but specified musical intonation of the hymns. It is for this reason that they survive till date in their original form without any variation. On the other hand the *Itihāsas*—literally recorded happenings—and celebrated in popular culture in prose and poetry; songs and ballads have been subjected to many improvisations and interpolations to suit various modes and literary forms. The improvisations and interpolations reflect the creative genius of their writers and the changing cultural mores of the epochs in which they were written. They also underscore the tolerance of freedom of expression that *Sanātana Dharma*

accorded its practitioners. There are two original narratives of the *Itihāsa*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, the one written by Sage *Vālmiki* and the *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* written by Sage *Vēda Vyāsa*. Additionally there are about three hundred versions of the great *Itihāsa* written in many Indian languages, in each of which their composers may be said to have exercised poetic licence. The *Itihāsa*, *Mahābhārata* has been told and retold in many Indian languages. Similarly the commentaries and translations of the *Purāṇās* into Indian languages vary in their details. In the resultant melee the ordinary student is lost, being unable to understand whether a narrative is from the original source or an interpolation.

It is in this context the present *Encyclopaedia* assumes significance. The author Surya N. Maruvada used the *Telugu* translations of the *Purāṇās* as the basis to write it. His intimate knowledge of *Saṃskṛtam* and the original texts stands him in good stead in nuancing the commentary. One hopes that the *Encyclopaedia* will be useful not only for the world–wide Indian diaspora to obtain gleanings from their spiritual heritage but other scholars desirous of understanding the rich spiritual and philosophical underpinnings of *Sanātana Dharma*.

– Narayanadas Upadhyayula

# Introduction

The purpose of this book is to make available all the stories and personalities in the Hindu Purāṇās in a compact package to those with an interest but no access to the Purāṇās in the original Sanskrit or in Telugu translations. Also, even if one had access to the original books, there are so many that finding all the stories about, say, Lord Ṣiva would require reading parts of almost a dozen Purāṇas. Video series on the Purāṇās had become available in recent decades of such classics as the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahā Bhārata, Om Namah Ṣivāya etc. By the nature of television series, much material that was not in the original Purāṇās was added to increase the number of episodes and to create greater interest. Having read the major ones in Sanskrit or in translations by great Telugu poets in my student days, I was aware of the inflation of the content. Sometimes though, it was not obvious whether a particular sub-story was original or a creative addition for TV. As it happened, I had a Telugu book titled "Pūrva Gāthā Lahari" by Mr. Vemuri Srinivasa Rao (1952) which contained reasonably detailed stories about almost every character in the Purāṇās and stories about a specific place of pilgrimage or a temple, as well as a selection of Upanishads. I would look up a story in this book and tell my wife and children whether the story was in the original or was a TV writer's addition. My daughter, whom we brought to the US when she was about 2 years old, was very interested in the stories but

never learned to read our mother tongue. She planted the idea in my head that an English book with the same content as Pūrva Gāthā Lahari would be useful, not only for Indians growing up outside India but even many in India who for various reasons including lack of time, could not read these masterpieces in Sanskrit or their mother tongue.

Looking around in 2011, I found a monumental work of over 900 large size pages, appropriately titled "Purāṇic Encyclopedia" by Mr. Vettam Mani, primarily intended for use as a Reference work by scholars. After writing to the publisher of Pūrva Gāthā Lahari and not receiving a response, I decided to write the present book, not as a word-for-word translation but as a rendering into contemporary idiomatic English. The Purāṇas, especially translations into other Indian languages, vary in the details. For this work, the stories as they appear in the Telugu versions are used.

Sanskrit and Telugu, similar to most other major Indian languages, are phonetic, meaning each character whether a single letter or a combination of letters, is a syllable. Also, there are many sounds in these two languages that are not available in English. I have listed in the Table of Alphabet Comparison below the 52 letters of the Telugu 'alphabet' and 48 letters in Sanskrit. There are a handful of letters in both languages that have not been in usage for some time that I chose not to include. During the last three or four centuries, scholars writing Sanskrit names in English have adopted 'Diacritical Marks' found under Latin Extended fonts (such as Ṣ and ṇ) to represent some sounds not used in English. In the present work, the Diacritical marks are used as shown in the Table.

The first sixteen characters listed in the Table are vowels, the rest are consonants. The 'alphabetic' sequence of both Sanskrit and Telugu is as depicted in the Table going from top to bottom and left to right. The present book arranges the names of Purāṇic characters in regular alphabetical sequence. All Sanskrit words, not just names, are written with initial capitalization. Certain concepts unique to the time (generally considered to be 2,000 BC to ~ 500 AD) and place (the Indian subcontinent, mostly the northern part, and the island of Sri Lanka) are explained in parenthetical notes. A list of the more complex of such concepts are listed in the Explanation of Frequently Used Terms in the Appendix for convenience and ready reference. When any of these terms occurs in a story, the first occurrence is marked with an asterisk *.

In this book, it is not unusual for the same name being used for male and female persons – while they are identical when written phonetically in English, they are generally identifiable as male or female due to different word-endings based on gender in Sanskrit and some other Indian languages.

The British spelling is used in this book for words spelt differently between British and American English. Examples are colour, flavour, behaviour, harbour, honour, humour, labour, neighbour, rumour and splendour, all of which are spelt without a u in American English. Another group of words, ending in -re in British English, such as centre, fibre, sombre and theatre end in -er in American English. Words ending in -ise in British English end in -ize in American English. The above examples are cited because these are the groups of words most likely to occur in a book of this genre.

Given the millennia-long time periods over which the stories described in this book would have occurred, it is not surprising that more than one character has the same name. Roman numerals have been assigned to distinguish these different identities. The purpose was only to differentiate between individuals with the same name. The modern western convention that John Smith III is a descendant of John Smith I does not apply. The Roman numeral assigned was based on the most likely time period during which each character with the same name had lived. Sometimes the temporal sequence is clear, i.e., a character appearing in the *Rāmāyaṇa* would be designated I if the other character is from the *Mahābhārata*. In many cases the sequence will not be so clear. In such situations, the author used factors such as with whom each of them had shared events and used his judgment in assigning the Roman numerals.

# Table of Alphabet Comparison

| Telugu | Sanskrit | English Equivalent | Telugu | Sanskrit | English Equivalent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| అ | अ | a, like u in ‘cup’, ‘but’ | ట | ट | ṭ, like t in ‘take’ |
| ఆ | आ | ā, (long), as a in ‘father’ | ఠ | ठ | ṭh, like ‘th’ in ‘anthill’ |
| ఇ | इ | i, like I in ‘sit’ or ‘bit’ | డ | ड | ḍ, like d in ‘dog’ |
| ఈ | ई | ī, (long) like ‘ee’ in ‘keep’ or ‘tweet’ | ఢ | ढ | ḍh, like ‘dh’ in ‘adhere’ |
| ఉ | उ | u, like u in ‘put’ | ణ | ण | ṇ, unique to Indian languages |
| ఊ | ऊ | ū, like u in ‘rude’ | త | त | t, like ‘th’ in ‘pith’ |
| ఎ | | e, like e in ‘get’ | థ | थ | th, like ‘th’ in ‘think’ |
| ఏ | ए | e, (long) like a in ‘gate’ | ద | द | d, like ‘th’ in ‘this’ |
| ఐ | ऐ | ai, like ai in ‘aisle’ | ధ | ध | dh, unique to Indian languages |
| ఒ | | o, shorter than o in ‘go’ or ‘so’ | న | न | n, like n in ‘nut’ |
| ఓ | ओ | ō, (long) like o in ‘whole’ | ప | प | p, like p in ‘pup’ |
| ఔ | औ | au, like ‘ou’ in ‘pound’ | ఫ | फ | ph, like ‘ph’ in ‘shepherd’ |
| ఋ | ऋ | ṛ, generally written as ri; ‘Kṛshṇa’, in lieu of ‘Krishṇa’ | బ | ब | b, like b in ‘bug’ |
| ౠ | ॠ | ṝū, not used | భ | भ | bh, like ‘bh’ in ‘abhor’ |
| అం | | am, unique to Indian languages | మ | म | m, like m in ‘map’ |
| అః | | ah, unique to Sanskrit | య | य | y, like y in ‘yet’ |
| క | क | k, like k in ‘kind’ | ర | र | r, like r in ‘red’ |
| ఖ | ख | kh, like kh in ‘bunkhouse’ | ల | ल | l, like l in ‘let’ |
| గ | ग | g, like g in ‘get’ | వ | व | v, like v in ‘van’ |
| ఘ | घ | gh, like ‘gh’ in ‘ghost’ | శ | श | ś, unique to Indian languages |
| ఙ | ङ | ng, unique to Indian languages | ష | ष | sh, like ‘sh’ in ‘ship’ |
| చ | च | ch, like ‘ch’ in ‘church’ | స | स | s, like s in ‘set’ |
| ఛ | छ | chh, like ‘ch’ in ‘change’ | హ | ह | h, like h in ‘hut’ |
| జ | ज | j, like j in ‘judge’ | ళ | ळ | ḷa, unique to Indian languages |
| ఝ | झ | jh, unique to Indian languages | క్ష | क्ष | ksh, as spelled |
| ఞ | ञ | ña, unique to Indian languages | ఱ | | ~r, unique to Indian languages |

# Unique Aspects of Hindu Mythology

While most of the major works from which the stories in the book are extracted have become available in English translations, they are massive enough that a lifetime is not enough to read all of them. If one is interested primarily in the lives of the characters in the Purāṇas, this translation is a compact and comprehensive source. The depiction of many of the characters in the Purāṇas, especially considering the age of these ancient books, is extremely sophisticated. One does not have to be a Hindu to enjoy and appreciate the stories. Neither this book itself nor the following exposition of some distinctive features of the stories in it, is intended to promote the Vēdic religion generally known as Hinduism. The purpose is only to make these interesting stories available and intelligible to a wider audience than those who know the Telugu language.

All ancient cultures have produced religious texts and mythologies full of great kings, warriors, magical creatures, monsters and Gods. However, some concepts found only in Hindu mythology are unique and ahead of their time, considering the books were composed 2000+ years ago.

- The sequence of incarnations of Vishṇu, the preserver in the Hindu Trinity, is: fish, tortoise, boar, hybrid man-lion, and the rest human. Science has established the stages of evolution of

life forms only about two hundred years ago.

- On the world where Brahma, the creator in the Hindu Trinity resides, the length of a day is equivalent to many years on earth. While the huge difference may be a stretch, the concept of a different time scale on different worlds was not known until a few hundred years ago.
- Secret Mantras were used to deploy or rescind powerful weapons. These secret Mantras were zealously guarded by those to whom they were taught and would not be taught to someone, always by word of mouth, until the Guru was absolutely certain that the disciple would not abuse or misuse the weapons.
- The concept of controlling the flow of a river was depicted in works preceding the times of Rāma. A king of the solar dynasty and ancestor of Rāma was advised that he must bring the waters of the heavenly river Ganga to earth to wash away the sins of his ancestors by submerging their ashes. He first prayed to Ganga; she agreed to descend to the earth but was concerned that the force of her fall to earth and flow on earth could be destructive. The king then prayed to Ṣiva who assured him that He could contain Ganga in His matted hair and let her down at a controlled rate. It appears that the first dam and spillway were built to control the mighty river Ganga.
- Ṣiva appears to be the first environmental activist, followed by Vishṇu. Among the Asuras destroyed by Ṣiva were three brothers named Tripura, or ‘three cities’. Vishṇu took at least two of his incarnations, Paraṣurāma and Kṛshṇa, to reduce the

burden on Goddess Earth.

- The concept of a focused energy beam as a powerful weapon is depicted in the form of Ṣiva's third eye. When He is really angry, such as when Manmatha, the God of Love, shot one of his flower arrows at Him to make Him fall in love with Pārvati, Ṣiva opened His third eye and Manmatha was instantly incinerated. A powerful, 20-beam infrared neodymium glass laser built at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in 1977 for the study of inertial confinement fusion and long-scale-length laser-plasma interactions was named SHIVA for the Hindu God.
- When someone with spiritual power such as a divine being or a Sage, is 'thought of', that entity will be instantly aware not only that someone is thinking of them, but who and for what purpose – in other words, telepathic communication. Wherever this means of communication occurs in the text, 'thought of' (or 'thinks of') is marked with an asterisk *, similar to the Sanskrit words listed in the Appendix.

Even a mythological world follows rules, and it is useful to understand the basic themes that recur in many stories:

- Gods and evil demons called Asuras, whose progenitors were half-brothers, were locked in constant enmity towards each other, with their relative fortunes waxing and waning with the times and the circumstances.
- Spiritual power was conferred on those who performed Tapas. Usually translated as 'meditation', Tapas was much more; generally directed towards a specific Deity such as Dēvi, the Supreme Being or one of the Trinity who, once

propitiated, was bound to grant any boon the performer of the Tapas requests with the exception of immortality. The Asuras made skilled use of this principle to obtain boons from Brahma or Ṣiva which would make it very difficult for Vishṇu, their mortal enemy, to kill them.

- Even Vishṇu was not exempt from the consequences of His actions if He had to depart from the righteous path, or Dharma. He sometimes had to use deceit or choose the lesser of evils to kill a demon empowered by powerful boons. When that happened He would face retribution, generally during His next incarnation.
- The throne of a kingdom passed from father to eldest son automatically, but the king always had to rule with the consent of the governed. The king and his family not only had to be good but seen by all his subjects to be good.
- Everyone was responsible for the consequences of their actions. The principle of strict individual responsibility is illustrated by the following episode in the Mahā Bhārata: Drōṇa, the leader of the Kaurava army, was invincible even to Arjuna, aided by Kṛshṇa. Kṛshṇa suggests breaking Drōṇa's will to fight by making him believe his son Aṣvatthāma died in war, using an elephant by the same name on the battlefield, which was killed. Drōṇa doesn't believe the news at first so Kṛshṇa persuades Dharmarāja, famous for his absolute honesty, to repeat the announcement of Aṣvatthāma's death adding 'the elephant' under his breath. The ruse works and Drōṇa is eliminated. At the end of Mahā Bhārata, as Dharmarāja accompanied by his four brothers and the wife

they all shared, is on his way to heaven, he learns he must first spend some time in hell to pay for his sin of telling a lie, unless someone else takes the burden of the sin. When asked, each of his brothers and his wife, none of whom ever disobeyed him, tells him the same thing – "you told the lie, you suffer the consequences".

- There was a system of checks and balances embedded in the Hindu caste system. The princely caste, Kshatriyas, had control of the tax-funded treasury and the armed military. The restraint on their great power was that they were obligated to protect and support Brahmins, whose primary assets were spirituality, knowledge and wisdom. A king was required to keep the Brahmins in his land safe and happy and could not deny any request by a Brahmin, however unreasonable it might be. An extreme example is of a demon king, Vṛshaparva, whose daughter once upset the daughter of the king's Guru. The Guru decided to leave the king's city because his daughter vowed she would not stay there. The king had his daughter become the servant of the Guru's daughter as the only compromise to keep the Guru from leaving. It was believed that if the Brahmin Guru left under the circumstances, the kingdom would have suffered a long drought and famine.

# – L –

**Lakshaṇa I** – Daughter of the king of Madra named Bṛhatsēna. She was desirous of marrying Kṛshṇa. Her father, aware of her wish, had a device built and fixed to the ceiling with a fish which could not be seen directly but its reflection is visible in the pool of water on the floor. He arranged a Swayamvara* for her with the proviso that the one who hits the fish using a bow (*and arrow*) provided for the purpose would win his daughter's hand in marriage. Many princes attempted the task and failed. Kṛshṇa succeeded and took Lakshaṇa away to Dwāraka (*Kṛshṇa's city in the middle of the ocean*) in his chariot. He defeated several enemy kings who tried to stop him. Bṛhatsēna later went to Dwāraka and performed Lakshaṇa's marriage to Kṛshṇa. *Bhāgavata*

**Lakshaṇa II**– Daughter of Duryōdhana. A Yādava (*the cowherd caste r*) young man named Sāmbu (*son of Kṛshṇa and Jāmbavati*) loved her and abducted her. Kaurava warriors attacked and captured Sāmbu. Balarāma (*Kṛshṇa's older brother*) went to Hastināpura (*capital city of the Kaurava empire*) and threatened to submerge the city in the Ganga river unless Sāmbu was freed. Bhīshma and other elders freed Sāmbu and Lakshaṇa, and handed her over to Sāmbu. *Bhāgavata*

**Lakshmaṇa I** – Son of King Daṣaratha. When Daṣaratha

performed a Putra Kāmēshṭi Yāga*, the Yagjna Purusha who emerged from the holy fire gave him a bowl of rice pudding and informed him that eating the pudding will cause his wives to bear sons. Daṣaratha gave a half portion of the pudding to two of his three wives, Kausalya the first wife and Kaikēyi his favourite. Each of them gave half of her portion to Daṣaratha's other wife, Sumitra. Lakshmaṇa and Ṣatrughna were born to Sumitra. Of the two, Lakshmaṇa was the result of the portion of pudding Kausalya gave Sumitra. Because of that, Lakshmaṇa was especially dear to Rāma (*Kausalya's son*). Rāma and Lakshmaṇa were inseparable from their earliest childhood. Sage Viṣvāmitra allowed Lakshmaṇa to accompany Rāma when he took Rāma with him to protect his Yāga. Lakshmaṇa had learnt archery along with his older brother. He assisted Rāma in killing the female Asura* Tāṭaka. After the successful conclusion of his Yāga, Sage Viṣvāmitra took both Rāma and Lakshmaṇa to the city of Mithila. King Janaka celebrated Lakshmaṇa's marriage to his niece Ūrmiḷa at the same time as Rāma's marriage to his daughter Sīta.

Lakshmaṇa was not able to enjoy married life for long after returning to Ayōdhya with his wife. As preparations were being made to celebrate Rāma's coronation as the crown prince, Kaikēyi demanded that Rāma be exiled to the forest. When it was decided that Rāma would leave for the forest, Lakshmaṇa berated his father and vowed that he himself would crown Rāma using his strength (*presumably against Bharata whom Kaikēyi wanted to be made the crown prince instead of Rāma*). Rāma pacified Lakshmaṇa and persuaded him that it was not the right thing to do. Lakshmaṇa could not envision being separated from his beloved brother and

accompanied him to the forest in spite of Rāma's attempt to stop him. He willingly left his wife (*she remained asleep throughout the time Sīta, Rāma amd Lakshmaṇa were in the forest*) and the creature comforts of a prince of the realm rather than be separated from Rāma.

Rāma, Sīta and Lakshmaṇa crossed the river Ganga and proceeded towards the forest. As they approached the Āṣram of Sage Bharadvāja, Lakshmaṇa observed that Bharata was coming towards them and warned Rāma that they ought to be ready to fight him. This was the only small-minded thought in the entire life of Lakshmaṇa, who forgot Bharata's love and devotion to Rāma.

During their travel through the forest, Rāma, Sīta and Lakshmaṇa visited many Sages. The brothers attacked and killed any Asuras they encountered on their way. Lakshmaṇa would stay awake every night armed with bow and arrows, guarding Rāma and Sīta as they slept. They eventually reached a forest named Panchavaṭi. Lakshmaṇa was gathering bamboo sticks to build a cottage. An Asura named Jambu Kumāra, son of Ṣūrpaṇakha (*sister of Rāvaṇa*) was performing Tapas* in the bamboo bushes at the time. Lakshmaṇa did not notice him and as he was cutting bamboo sticks with a sword, struck and killed Jambu Kumāra. Ṣūrpaṇakha, looking to find out who killed her son, saw Rāma and Lakshmaṇa and instantly fell in love with them. She expressed her desire to them. When they both rejected her advances, she started to harass Sīta. With Rāma's permission, Lakshmaṇa cut off her nose and ears. Crying with pain and humiliation, she went and told the Asuras Khara and Dūshaṇa. The Asuras attacked Rāma and Lakshmaṇa, and were killed.

Some time later, an Asura named Mārīcha (*son of Tāṭaka, whom the brothers killed earlier*) took the form of a golden deer and was running around playfully near them. Sīta wished to have the deer to play with. Lakshmaṇa strongly advised against any attempt to capture the deer (*suspecting Māya, or trickery, typical of Asuras*) but Rāma, paying no heed to his warnings, chased the deer. After drawing Rāma far away, the deer died from Rāma's arrow, plaintively shouting "Lakshmaṇa!" in a human voice. Lakshmaṇa remained unperturbed, certain that that was also Asura trickery, but Sīta feared for Rāma's safety and demanded that Lakshmaṇa should go and make sure Rāma was alright. When Lakshmaṇa tried to assure Her that nothing untoward would happen to Rāma, Sīta heaped abuse on him, accusing him of designs on Her. Unable to convince Her otherwise, Lakshmaṇa left the cottage looking for Rāma. When the brothers returned, Sīta was not in the cottage. They looked everywhere around but could not find Her.

Rāma and Lakshmaṇa frantically searched all over the forest for Sīta. They encountered an Asura named Kabandha and killed him, releasing him from his Ṣāpa*. He advised them to go to the Vānara* King Sugrīva (see **Vāli**) who lived on the banks of the Pampa river. They did as suggested and became friends with Sugrīva. Sugrīva promised that he would assist them in their quest. Rāma killed Vāli and installed Sugrīva as the king of Kishkindha. They stayed in Kishkindha one entire rainy season. Sugrīva was not making any preparations to search for Sīta. Lakshmaṇa, angry with Sugrīva for not following through on his promise, berated him, saying "O king of Vānaras! Why are you so ungrateful to your benefactors?" Vānaras including Hanumān went searching for

Sīta and returned with the information that Sīta was a prisoner of Rāvaṇa in Lanka. Rāma, Lakshmaṇa, Sugrīva and the Vānara army entered Lanka*. A battle with Rāvaṇa's army started. Lakshmaṇa killed several Asura warriors. Then Indrajit (*son of Rāvaṇa*), using the Nāga* Astra, bound and incapacitated Rāma and Lakshmaṇa. They managed to free themselves thanks to the assistance of Garutmanta. Rāvaṇa then arrived on the battlefield and struck Rāma and Lakshmaṇa with his arrows. Rāma was able to recover by chanting a Mantra named Āditya Hṛdaya (*literally, the heart of Sūrya, the Sun God*) but Lakshmaṇa remained unconscious. Rāma sent Hanumān to bring the restorative medicinal herb Sanjīvani and revived Lakshmaṇa with it. Rāma finally won the war and returned to Ayōdhya accompanied by Lakshmaṇa and Sīta.

Rāma was crowned emperor with Ayōdhya as the capital. He and his family felt that they had overcome all their troubles. Sons named Angada and Chandrakētu were born to Lakshmaṇa and Ūrmiḷa. They were given the western regions of the empire to rule.

One day, a spy named Bhadra informed Rāma that some citizens were critical of the royal family, specifically questioning the virtue of Sīta (*it was customary, especially for a righteous ruler such as Rāma to send his people in disguise among ordinary people to ascertain if the king was, in fact, ruling with the consent of the governed. What follows would be considered cruel, inhuman and misogynistic today. Kings in ancient India, however, had very little choice in such matters. They had not only to be virtuous but be seen, even by the lowliest of their subjects, to be virtuous*). Rāma immediately summoned Lakshmaṇa, informed him of the suspicion about Sīta's virtue and directed him to take Sīta to the

forest and leave her there. Rāma and Lakshmaṇa were both certain that Sīta was pure as the driven snow but a determined Rāma instructed Lakshmaṇa not to question his decision. A chariot was made ready the very next day. Sīta was pleased about the journey, thinking that the chariot was going to take her to an Āṣram so that she could spend some time with the wives of the Munis (*she had earlier expressed to Rāma a desire to do so*). Lakshmaṇa also entered the chariot along with Sīta. He was not his usual self but looked sad and downcast. Tears were streaming down his face. He did not say a word to Sīta. Sīta wondered what could be so unsettling to Lakshmaṇa who was unfazed even during the war with Rāvaṇa. She finally asked "Lakshmaṇa! Why are you so unhappy?" Lakshmaṇa was at first speechless; he then touched Sīta's feet and cried bitterly. He finally related to her how Rāma ordered him to do the unspeakable act of abandoning her in the forest. What could the stunned Sīta say? She consoled Lakshmaṇa saying "Lakshmaṇa! You are following the orders of the king, your older brother. You are doing the right thing, not anything improper. Do not worry." A wave of sadness then enveloped her. Lakshmaṇa dropped her in the forest, and returned to Ayōdhya.

Ever since Sīta was banished to the forest, Ayōdhya was a troubled city. The beginning of the end of the Rāma Avatāra (*incarnation*) set in. Yama (*the God of Death*) came disguised as a Brahmin and told Rāma he needed to speak with Rāma in secret. He asked that a guard be posted outside the closed door to prevent anyone from entering. He insisted that he would speak only if Rāma took a vow to behead any person who enters the room while they were conversing. Rāma took the vow (*a Kshatriya, especially*

*the king could not refuse any request by a Brahmin*). While Rāma and the Brahmin were conversing, Sage Durvāsa (*notorious for his fiery temper and propensity for handing out a Ṣāpa**) arrived and demanded to see Rāma immediately. Lakshmaṇa, at the door, explained to the Sage that Rāma had expressly forbidden anyone to enter the room until the Brahmin visiting him left. Durvāsa flew into one of his signature rages and said "How dare you block a hungry Brahmin who came expecting hospitality? If you do not let me see Rāma immediately, I will give you and your entire family and descendants a terrible Ṣāpa." Lakshmaṇa, deciding that it was better for him alone to die rather than subject the entire dynasty to the Sage's Ṣāpa, entered the room and announced the arrival of Durvāsa. As soon as Lakshmaṇa entered, the Brahmin (*Yama*) disappeared. His conversation with the Brahmin having been interrupted, Rāma was in a quandary. What could he do? Should he behead Lakshmaṇa who suffered greatly by his side? Should he break his vow? He consulted with Brahmin elders. They suggested that being expelled from the city is equivalent to execution and the proper course is to deport him to a foreign country. Rāma ordered Lakshmaṇa's expulsion. Lakshmaṇa left Ayōdhya, drowned himself in the Sarayu river and attained Mukti*. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Lakshmaṇa II** – Son of Duryōdhana. He fought in the Mahā Bhārata war. He joined four other warriors to ambush Abhimanyu. Abhimanyu killed him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Lakshmi I** – At the beginning of creation, a beautiful young woman emerged from the left side of the Supreme Being. At the direction of the Supreme Being, She immediately split herself into two equally beautiful women. One was Rādha and the other was

Lakshmi. The male portion of the Supreme Being also split into two. One of them, with four arms, was Lord Vishṇu, who took up residence in Swarga (*heaven*), accompanied by Lakshmi. The other, with two arms, was Kṛshṇa who stayed on earth with Rādha. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

Once upon a time, Lakshmi (*Goddess of Wealth*), who was the embodiment of the wealth of Indra*, fell into the ocean due to a Ṣāpa* by Sage Durvāsa. When the Dēvas and Asuras churned the ocean, Lakshmi was one of the treasures they retrieved. Lord Vishṇu married Her. Lakshmi took incarnations along with Vishṇu during some of His incarnations. She was Sīta during the Rāma incarnation and Rukmiṇi to Vishṇu's Kṛshṇa Avatāra.

Once, while Lord Vishṇu and Lakshmi were alone together, Vishṇu suddenly looked at Her and laughed. Lakshmi became angry and assumed that He was making fun of Her because she had to share Her husband with another wife of His. She then gave Vishṇu a Ṣāpa that His head would be severed. Lord Vishṇu thereupon lost His head. A Hayagrīva (*horse's head*) was attached. Hayagrīva became one of Vishṇu's many names.

Once, as King Rēvata was passing by riding a horse, Vishṇu called out to Lakshmi, saying "Look! What a beautiful horse!" Lakshmi stood a long time staring at the horse. Vishṇu said to Her "You do not seem able to take your eyes off the horse. It looks like you are desirous of assuming the shape of a horse". He then gave Her a Ṣāpa that She would turn into a mare. Lakshmi was extremely saddened by the Ṣāpa She received. Vishṇu then said to Her "You will be released from my Ṣāpa when you give birth to a son like me. Pray to Ṣiva and tell Him that Vishṇu abandoned

you." She became a mare and was performing Tapas* directed towards Lord Ṣiva. Ṣiva appeared before Her and said "You should be directing your Tapas to your husband. Why are you meditating on me?" She related recent events to Ṣiva and said "I am directing my Tapas to you because I know there is no difference between Hari (*Vishṇu*) and Hara (*Ṣiva*)." Assuring Her that He would protect Her, Ṣiva went to Vishṇu and asked Him "Why did you abandon Lakshmi?" Vishṇu Himself then assumed the form of a horse and mated with Lakshmi. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Once the son was born, She was released from the Ṣāpa and regained Her form as Lakshmi. Vishṇu asked Her to return with Him, but She was unhappy because She could not leave Her son nor could She care for him in Her new form. Vishṇu assured Her that a man named Turvasa would care for their son and persuaded Her to return home with Him. The son's name was Haihaya (*also known as Hayahaya*). *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Lakshmi II** – Daughter of Dharaṇi and Daksha Prajāpati*. She married the Manu*, Dharma. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Lanka** – An Island (*presnt-day Sri Lanka; formerly Ceylon*). This and the islands Simhaḷa, Pānchajanya, and Mandehāruṇa were formed when the sons of Sagara dug up the island of Jambū (*present-day Indian subcontinent*) searching for their Yāga horse.

Once, Ādi Ṣēshu (*huge multi-hooded articulate serpent on which Lord Vishṇu rests*) and Vāyu (*the Wind God*) were involved in a dispute regarding which of the two is more powerful. Ṣēshu coiled himself around the Mēru mountain (*the tallest mountain in the world according to the Purāṇas, at the extreme northern end of the known world*) and would not let go. Vāyu, in an attempt to

force Ṣēshu to release the mountain, blew as hard as he could. He was unable to loosen Ṣēshu's grip but the force of the wind released a chunk of the mountain, which fell into the ocean and became Lanka*. Once, Lord Brahma was performing Tapas* on the island. He happened to see the Apsara* Ūrvaṣi and spontaneously ejaculated. Pulastya was born from Brahma's semen. Lanka thus became the home of Pulastya and his dynasty (*most notably Rāvaṇa*). *Vichitra Rāmāyaṇa*

**Lapita** – Second wife of Sage Mandapāla (see **Jaritāri**). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Lata** – An Apsara*. Her friends included Vanda and Samīchi. Once, she and her friends went to earth, saw a Brahmin performing Tapas* and heckled him with the intent to disrupt his Tapas. The Brahmin gave them a Ṣāpa* that they would turn into crocodiles. When they pleaded with him to release them from the Ṣāpa, he told them that they will be released when they are thrown out of the water. The bodies of water where these crocodiles lived were referred to as Nāri Tīrthas* (*Nāri is Sanskrit for woman*). Arjuna during his tour of pilgrimage was bathing in the pond where Lata was a crocodile. When the crocodile grabbed hold of his leg, he pulled it out of the water and threw it on the ground. Lata then regained her female form and went away. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Lava** – One of the twin sons of Lord Rāma. (see **Kuṣa**). *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Lavaṇa** – An Asura*. Son of Madhu. His mother was Kumbhīnasa. His father gave him a spear given to him by Lord Ṣiva. The possession of such a powerful weapon made him

extremely arrogant. He went on a spree of harassing Munis. His daily food intake consisted of a hundred elephants, two hundred horses, six hundred cattle and a thousand deer. Unable to tolerate his depredations, Chyavana and other Sages approached Lord Rāma and beseeched Him to kill Lavaṇa. Ṣatrughna (*youngest brother of Rāma*) said he will go and kill the Asura. The weapon created by Lord Brahma to facilitate the killing of Madhu and Kaiṭabha was in Rāma's possession. Rāma handed it to Ṣatrughna and revealed to him the Mantras (*incantations*) to deploy and abort the weapon. He also warned Ṣatrughna to fight and kill Lavaṇa only when the spear was not in Lavaṇa's hands. Ṣatrughna engaged Lavaṇa in a fierce battle and finally killed him when Lavaṇa chose to use uprooted trees as his weapon. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Likhita** – A Brahmin. He lived on the banks of the river Bāhuda. His older brother was Ṣankha. Once, when his brother was away from the Āṣram, Likhita ate some fruits that were there. When his brother returned, he confessed what he had done. Ṣankha determined that eating fruits from the Āṣram while he was away constituted theft and asked Likhita to go to the king, confess his crime and suffer the punishment the king metes out. Likhita accordingly went to King Sudyumna, confessed that he had committed theft and begged to be punished. The king refused to punish Likhita for his act. Likhita, insisting that he was culpable, had both his hands cut off. He then returned to the Āṣram and showed his brother his arms with the hands severed. Ṣankha applauded his brother's righteous action and asked him to take a bath in the river and come back. As soon as Likhita took a bath in

the river, his hands were restored. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Līlāvati I** – Wife of the Asura* Hiraṇyakaṣipu (*along with Hiraṇyāksha, this was the first of three Asura incarnations of Lord Vishṇu's gate-keepers Jaya and Vijaya due to a Ṣāpa**). While Līlāvati was pregnant, Hiraṇyakaṣipu went to the forest to perform Tapas*. Considering Hiraṇyakaṣipu's absence as a great opportunity, Indra* went on a campaign of killing Asuras. Indra even planned to kill Līlāvati's unborn child. Sage Nārada intervened and stopped Indra, telling him that the boy in her womb will be a good person (*by Indra's standards, meaning not an enemy of the Dēvas. Actually, her child was Prahlāda, a great devotee of Vishṇu*). Nārada took Līlāvati to his Āṣram and protected her during her pregnancy and her husband's absence. Nārada taught her about the greatness of Lord Vishṇu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Līlāvati II** – Daughter of King Yudhājit. Wife of King Dhruvasindhu. Her son was Ṣatrujit. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Linga** – Once upon a time, many Sages were performing Tapas* in the Dāruka forest. Ṣiva started to wander around, acting in an insane manner, wearing strange disguises, alternately weeping, laughing and screaming loudly. He also went naked to where women were, and made lewd gestures. The Sages, upset at the disruption of their Tapas and not realizing it was Ṣiva, gave him one Ṣāpa* that he would turn into a donkey, and another that he would become an Asura*. The Ṣāpas had no effect on Him and He continued His weird behaviour. The Sages called out to Him, and threatened Him, saying "You should not go about naked; wear

clothing. If you do not cover yourself, your Linga (*Phallus*) will fall off." Saying "What you are suggesting is impossible for even Lord Brahma to do", He masked His full form and stood in front of them in the form of just a Linga. Immediately, the world started experiencing turmoil. No one in the world had the power to reproduce. Sūrya (*the Sun God*) started going cold. As such calamities were proliferating, the Sages went to Lord Brahma and related the plight of the world. Brahma, who knew that the Linga was Lord Ṣiva, told them who the Linga was and advised them to worship the Linga with devotion and respect.

Once, Brahma and Vishṇu were engaged in a dispute as to which of them is superior to the other. Then a luminous Linga appeared before them. Determined to find the beginning and end of the object, Brahma and Vishṇu entered the Linga and proceeded in opposite directions. Neither of them was able to reach either end of the object. They came out, realizing that there was an entity superior to both of them. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*

**Lōhitāsya I** – Once upon a time, as Kumāraswāmi (*younger son of Lord Ṣiva, born with a specific mission to help the Dēvas, as their military commander, to defeat the Asuras**) was born and was indulging in childhood antics, Indra* was afraid of him and sent Sapta Mātṛkas (*literally, seven mothers*) to kill him. When they saw Kumāraswāmi's Tejas*, the women feared him and sought his protection. From the anger (*at Indra*) of the seven women, a woman emerged. Her name was Lōhitāsya. She entertained Kumāraswāmi. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Lōhitāsya II** – Son of Emperor Hariṣchandra of Ayōdhya. While he was still a child, his father lost his kingdom and Lōhitāsya along

with his parents went to the forest to live. Then his mother Chandramati was sold to Kauṣika who lived in the city of Kāṣi*. Lōhitāsya was included in the trade and also performed any chores Kauṣika assigned to him.

One day, while he was gathering kindling in the forest, he was bitten by a snake and died. Chandramati took his corpse to the cemetery grounds to cremate it. Hariṣchandra was working as the keeper of the cemetery. She had no money to pay the fee for cremation. Then Viṣvāmitra (*his intense testing of Hariṣchandra's honesty and truthfulness concluded favourably*) and the Dēvas arrived on the scene, restored Lōhitāsya to life and liberated his parents from their bondage and indebtedness. Lōhitāsya succeeded his father as emperor of Ayōdhya. His son was Harita (see **Rōhita**). *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Lōla** – Son of a Muni. He entered the womb of Utpalāvati, who, at the time, was in the form of a doe. Immediately, she started to speak like a human. When he was born, all the Munis came and named him Tāmasa (*darkness*) because he was born at a time when it was totally dark. He became Tāmasa Manu*. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Lōlārka** – Sūrya (*the Sun God*). Once upon a time, Lord Ṣiva wished to make the city of Kāṣi* His home and dispatched Sūrya there with instructions to see to it that Divōdās, the king of the city is expelled from there. Sūrya tried every stratagem he could think of, to no avail. Unwilling and afraid to face Lord Ṣiva without succeeding in the mission, he stayed in Kāṣi disguised as Lōlārka, Udayārka etc. Because he had the desire (*Lōla*) to remain in the city of Kāṣi, he acquired the name Lōlārka. (*Kāṣi Khanḍa is a*

*'Sthala Purāṇa'**). *Kāṣi Khanḍa*

**Lopāmudra I** – Daughter born to the king of Vidarbha due to the spiritual power of Sage Agastya's Tapas*. (*Another narrative is that she was the embodiment of Lord Vishṇu's Māya [power of illusion] born as the daughter of a king named Kavēra*.) She performed Tapas. An aspect of her became Lopāmudra. Another aspect of her became the Kāvēri river (*flows in the southern Indian States of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu*). Sage Agastya asked the king to give Lopāmudra to him in marriage. The king hesitated, pondering the appropriateness of giving his princess to a Sage who lives in the forest and subsists on roots and herbs. His daughter said "Father! Do not worry. Give me to the Great Sage. I want to be his wife." The king accordingly performed her marriage with Sage Agastya. When Agastya was about to consummate his marriage, Lopāmudra insisted that he first bring her fine clothes and ornaments. Agastya went far and wide and managed to bring the fine clothes and ornaments his wife wanted. Lopāmudra told him she wanted a son with good moral character. She was pregnant for seven years before giving birth to a son who was as brilliant as Sūrya (*the Sun God*) named Dṛḍhasya (*also known as Idhmavāhu*). *Mahā Bhārata*

A Brahmin man in a previous life. He worshipped Dēvi (*Tripurasundari*) with sincere devotion. By Dēvi's Grace, he lost his male attributes and became a lovely woman with appearance similar to Dēvi's own. When Agastya attempted to have sex with her, she told him "My body was formed by the power of a Mantra. You will be burnt to ashes if you touch me. You first have to worship Dēvi using the same Mantra." When he asked her to teach

him the Mantra, she told him she was ineligible to teach because of being female and guided him to Hayagrīva (*a form of Lord Vishṇu*). Agastya learnt not only the Mantra he needed but other valuable knowledge as well, including Trimṣati and Ṣrīvidya. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Lopāmudra II** – Wife of Sage Dadhīchi. While she was pregnant, her husband gave up his life to enable the Dēvas to fashion weapons from his bones. Considering the loss of her husband as unbearable, she wanted to end her own life by entering the funeral pyre. Lord Brahma appeared and said to her "There is a boy in your womb. Save his life." She gave birth under a peepul tree, left the baby and joined her husband by immolating herself. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

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**Madālasa I** – Daughter of a Vidyādhara (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers*) named Champa (*also known as Champaka*). *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Madālasa II** – Daughter of a Gandharva* king named Viṣvāvasu. She was extremely beautiful. An Asura*, Pātāḷakētu, abducted her and hid her in a cave. Madālasa, feeling helpless as the captive of an Asura, was about to commit suicide. Just then, Surabhi (*the cow of the Dēvas*) assured her that the Asura was not her husband and that a prince who comes to kill the Asura will marry her. She felt better on hearing these words. After some time, King Kuvalayāṣva mounting a horse given to him by the Sage Gālava, came to kill the Asura. The Asura assumed the form of a wild boar and entered a tunnel in the ground. Kuvalayāṣva followed him into the tunnel. There he saw two beautiful women. He was amazed at finding them in the Asura's lair. One of the women introduced herself to him as Kunḍala, wife of Pushkaraṣāli and told him that the other woman, her friend Madālasa, was abducted by the Asura named Pātāḷakētu and held captive there. She requested him to rescue them and to marry Madālasa. Madālasa too fell in love with him. Kuvalayāṣva killed Pātāḷakētu, married Madālasa, and returned

with her to his city.

Tāḷakētu, brother of Pātāḷakētu, was angry with Kuvalayāṣva for killing his brother and wanted to avenge the death of his brother by deceit. One day, while Kuvalayāṣva was riding his horse around the city to ensure the security of the people, Tāḷakētu, disguised as a Muni, approached Kuvalayāṣva and requested him to donate the gold chain he wore around his neck to help defray the cost of a Yāga he planned to perform. Kuvalayāṣva, trusting him, complied with the request. The fake Muni then requested Kuvalayāṣva to remain at his Āṣram (*outside the city*) while he bathed in the river. With the king sitting in the Āṣram, the Asura, using his dark magic, instantly reached the city, proclaimed that Kuvalayāṣva had died and showed the king's ornament as proof. Madālasa died instantly on hearing the 'news'. The whole city was mourning the death of the king. Not long afterwards, Kuvalayāṣva returned to the city. The people were surprised and ecstatic to learn that Kuvalayāṣva was alive. They found out from Kuvalayāṣva about the trick played by the Asura. The king, though, was devastated by the death of Madālasa and lost all interest in affairs of state. Learning of this tragedy, Kuvalayāṣva's friends, the Nāga* princes, informed their father. Saying there is nothing that cannot be achieved with determined effort, the Nāga King Aṣvataru prayed to Sarasvati, mastered music by Her blessing and impressing Lord Ṣiva with his musical talent, obtained a boon that Madālasa will live again. Madālasa was then born as Aṣvataru's daughter. Aṣvataru invited Kuvalayāṣva and gave him Madālasa in marriage. He returned to the city with her and lived happily. Vikrānta, Subāhu, Ṣatrumardana, and Alarka were their sons. Madālasa taught her

sons the Dharma (*righteous path*) and Brahma* Gjnāna (*knowledge of the Supreme Being*). *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Madana** – Son of Dushṭa Buddhi and brother of Vishaya. Seeing the letter sent by his father (*but altered by Vishaya*), he performed the marriage of his sister with Chandrahāsa. When Chandrahāsa was preparing to go to the temple of Chanḍika, the king summoned him. Madana went to the temple, sending Chandrahāsa to the king's Sabha (*court*).

The killers contracted by Dushṭa Buddhi to kill Chandrahāsa followed orders to kill a man who came to the temple alone but killed Madana instead. Chandrahāsa went to the temple later, prayed to Chanḍika (*one of the names of Devi, the Supreme Being*), and requested Her to bring Madana back to life. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Madayanti I** – Daughter of King Sṛnjaya. Once, Sage Nārada and his nephew Parvata visited the king. He had his daughter Madayanti look after them during their visit. She and Nārada fell in love with each other. Nārada, in violation of his agreement with his nephew that they will not keep secrets from each other, failed to reveal to Parvata that he fell in love. Once Parvata realized Nārada's violation of their agreement, he gave Nārada a Ṣāpa* that he will have a monkey face. Nārada countered with a Ṣāpa that Parvata will lose his privilege of traveling to Swarga (*heaven*). Nārada stayed as Sṛnjaya's guest. Sṛnjaya was preparing to perform his daughter's marriage. Madayanti told her parents that she will not marry anyone but Nārada. Her father did not like her preference but her mother advised him to do as their daughter wished. Her marriage was performed with Nārada. Some time

later, Parvata happened to see Nārada in a garden. They agreed to release each other from their Ṣāpas. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Madayanti II** – Wife of Kalmāshapāda (*another name of Mitrasakha*). She had the property of being invisible to anyone who was not clean. Sage Gautama had sent one of his disciples, Udanka, to bring her earrings. Udanka showed her a token of recognition from Kalmāshapāda and she gave him her earrings. A Ṣāpa* had been given to Kalmāshapāda that he will die when he slept with his wife. Kalmāshapāda asked Madayanti to bear a Kshētraja* son by Sage Vasishṭha. She became pregnant and remained pregnant for seven years. Tired of waiting to give birth, she hit her stomach with an Aṣma (*stone*). Then her son was born and was named Aṣmaka. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

Wife of Mitrasakha. When Sage Vasishṭha gave Mitrasakha a Ṣāpa that he would become an Asura*, he prepared to give the Sage a counter-Ṣāpa holding water consecrated by Mantras in his palm. Madayanti stopped him, arguing that it is improper to give a counter-Ṣāpa to one's Guru. *Bhāgavata*

**Mādhavi I** – Daughter of Yayāti, king of the city of Pratishṭhāna Pura. A Muni had given her a boon that even after becoming a mother, her virginity will remain intact. A Muni named Gālava and his friend Garutmanta* came to Yayāti seeking eight hundred horses of a specifc kind to give to Sage Viṣvāmitra as Guru Dakshiṇa*. The king said he had no horses but asked them to take his daughter Mādhavi and obtain the horses by offering her to some king. Mādhavi told Gālava that she had a boon that she will remain a virgin even after bearing a child. She also told him that after bearing a child by a king who gives him some horses in

return for her, she will leave that king and return to Gālava. In this manner, they first went to King Ikshvāku who took her and gave Gālava two hundred horses. After he had a son Vasumanas by Mādhavi, Ikshvāku returned her to Gālava.

Gālava next gave her to Divōdās and obtained two hundred horses from him. Divōdās had a son Pravardhana by her, and returned her to Gālava. Gālava next went to Auṣīnara, gave him Mādhavi and obtained two hundred horses from him. Auṣīnara had a son, Ṣibi by her and returned her. Realizing that he cannot get any more horses, Gālava gave the six hundred horses and Mādhavi to Viṣvāmitra. Viṣvāmitra accepted them as fulfillment of Guru Dakshiṇa. He had a son, Ashṭaka by her. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mādhavi II** – Wife of Dharmadhwaja. Tulasi was their daughter. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Madhu** – An Asura*. He prayed to Lord Ṣiva who was pleased and gave him a Triṣūla (*trident*) created from His own. The trident had the power to pursue and kill the enemy at whom it was aimed, and return to the person who deployed it. Ṣiva informed Madhu that if he ever behaved in an unrighteous manner, the trident will return to Him. Madhu married Rāvaṇa's sister Kumbhīnasa after raping her. A son Lavaṇa was born to them. Madhu gave the trident to his son after explaining its special power. Madhu was unhappy about Lavaṇa's evil ways and warned him that the trident will leave him if he did not amend his ways. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Madhu and Kaiṭabha** – At the end of the last great deluge (*Praḷaya, signifies the end of life in the universe and preparation for the beginning of a new cycle of life*), Lord Vishṇu was asleep

on the ocean (*Vishṇu's sleep between the end of the world and a new beginning is special and is called Yōga Nidra, which is also the name of a Goddess who is in control of Vishṇu during that time*), Brahma was born from His navel and Asuras* named Madhu and Kaiṭabha were born from His ears. When the Asuras started harassing Brahma, He prayed to Vishṇu, seeking His protection. Unable to wake up Vishṇu, Brahma then prayed to Yōga Nidra and requested Her to leave Vishṇu's body. She left Vishṇu and stood aside. Vishṇu then woke up and apprised of the situation, fought Madhu and Kaiṭabha. However hard He fought, He was unable to defeat them. Vishṇu then addressed the Asuras saying "I am alone, fighting the two of you. Let me rest for a while (*rules of engagement, even between sworn enemies, were much more civilized. Even in the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahā Bhārata wars, there was never any fighting between sunset and sunrise*). The fighting stopped. After resting, Vishṇu summoned the Asuras and said "O Asuras! You cannot fight me. Apologise and request my Ṣaraṇu*." They replied "You are the one who cannot fight us and should request our Ṣaraṇu. Do so and we will grant you a boon." Vishṇu then said "In that case, give me a boon that you two will die (*this is another aspect that is incomprehensible in today's world, with anyone offering to grant a boon had to give whatever was requested*). Madhu and Kaiṭabha, who did not suspect that Vishṇu would make such an unlikely request for a boon (*but not able to save themselves by denying it*), unhappily asked him to kill them where there was no water (*hoping to escape death because the whole world was under water*). Vishṇu then enlarged His thighs, placed the Asuras on the now dry thighs and killed them.

The fat from the bodies of Madhu and Kaiṭabha fell down and became earth. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

These same Asuras took birth as a Gaja (*elephant*) and a Kacchapa (*turtle*) and were fighting each other fiercely. Garutmanta*, on his way to obtain Amṛtam* (*to obtain release for himself and his mother from servitude to his step-mother Kadruva*), ate them both. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Madhucchanda** – The fifty-first of Sage Viṣvāmitra's one hundred sons. When Viṣvāmitra rescued Ṣunaṣṣēpha from being sacrificed in a Yāga, he developed fatherly affection towards him and asked his sons to accept him as their eldest brother. They scorned the idea and made fun of it, the oldest fifty rejecting the proposal. Viṣvāmitra gave them a Ṣāpa* that they will become Mlēcchas (*barbarians*). Madhucchanda and the immediately younger sons agreed with their father's suggestion. Thus, Viṣvāmitra's sons divided themselves into two distinct Pravara (*branches*). *Bhāgavata*

**Madhumanta** – City built near the Vindhya mountain by Danḍa. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Madhurapura** – There was a place called Madhuvana by the banks of the Kāḷindi river. It was ruled by Madhu after whom the city was named Madhurapura (*the same city has the name Mathura in the Bhāgavata*). Ṣatrughna (*Lord Rāma's youngest brother*) killed Madhu's son Lavaṇa and gave the city to his sons Pushkara and Pushkarāksha. After the decline of the Sūrya (*solar; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Chandra, or lunar*) dynasty, the city was taken over by the Yādavas. It became

the capital of Ṣūrasēna (*father of Kamsa, Lord Kṛshṇa's evil uncle*). *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Madhuvana** – The garden of the Vānara* King Vāli. Vāli guarded it with loving care. The Asura Dundubhi destroyed it to make Vāli come and fight him. The Vānaras joyously entered the garden when Hanumān returned after finding Sīta. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Mādri** – Daughter of King Madra. She and Kunti were wives of King Pānḍu. They both stayed most of the time in the forest with their husband. Pānḍu had a Ṣāpa* that he would die if he made love to his wife. In accordance with the direction of her husband and with the help of Kunti, she invoked the Aṣvins (*twin physicians to the Dēvas*) and had sons Nakula and Sahadēva by them. One day, seeing the extremely beautiful Mādri, Pānḍu could not restrain himself and ignoring her protests, he attempted to have sex with her. He promptly died due to the Ṣāpa. Mādri immolated herself on his funeral pyre. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mahābhauma** – Son of Arihu and husband of Supushṭa. Their son was Ayutānīka. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mahābhishu** – A king of the Ikshvāku dynasty. He never strayed from the Dharma (*righteous path*) and attained Swarga (*heaven*) by performing Aṣvamēdha Yāgas*. One day, while he was in Indra's* Sabha (*court*), Ganga (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*) assumed the form of a woman and came there. A gust of wind made the garment covering her chest slip aside and Mahābhishu kept staring at her, lovestruck. Brahma, watching all this, gave Mahābhishu a Ṣāpa* that he would take birth as a mortal on earth. Mahābhishu said to Brahma "There is

only one king of great virtue on earth now, Pratīpa. I shall be born as his son." Brahma consented to his wish. Mahābhishu was born as Pratīpa's son with the name Ṣantanu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mahābhōja** – Son of Sātvata. *Bhāgavata*

**Mahākāya** – One of the major commanders in the army of Rāvaṇa. After the death of Dhūmrāksha, he did most of the fighting. Angada (*son of Vāli*) killed him. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Mahānābha** – Son of the Asura* Hiraṇyāksha (see **Jaya and Vijaya**). *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Mahānandi** – A descendant of King Ṣiṣunāga. Son of Nandivardhana. He and a Ṣūdra* woman had a son named Mahāpadmāvati. *Bhāgavata*

**Mahāpadmāvati** – Son of Mahānandi and a Ṣūdra* woman. His Kshatriya (*warrior or princely caste, second in the hierarchy below Brahmins*) dynasty ended with him. His son was Sumālya. The Nandas ruled the kingdom after him. *Bhāgavata*

**Mahāpārṣva** – One of the commanders in the army of Rāvaṇa. He gave Rāvaṇa evil advice, saying "Live happily with Sīta". *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Mahāṣani** – An Asura*. Son of Hiraṇya. He attacked Indra* and forced him to flee to Pātāḷa (*netherworld*). Afterwards he went to battle Varuṇa (*the Rain God*) who, in fear of him, not only struck up a friendship with the Asura but gave his daughter in marriage to him. With Indra missing from Dēva Lōka (*heaven*), the Dēvas approached Lord Vishṇu. When even Vishṇu felt unable to defeat Mahāṣani, He directed Varuṇa to bring Indra back. Varuṇa visited

Mahāṣani. Mahāṣani greeted him with respect and asked "What do you want? Tell me. I will give it to you." Varuṇa asked him to summon Indra. Indra returned to Dēva Lōka. Afterwards, Indra went to the banks of the Gautami river and prayed to Lord Ṣiva. Ṣiva appeared to Indra, gave him boons and killed Mahāṣani. *Brahma Purāṇa*

**Mahāsvanta** – Son of Amarshaṇa and father of Viṣvasāhya. *Bhāgavata*

**Mahāsura** – An Asura*. Father of Surasa. *Skānda Purāṇa*

**Mahātapa** – A Muni. He taught Prajāpāla the path to Mukti*. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Mahati** – Sage Nārada's Vīṇa (*seven-stringed musical instrument, probably the most ancient*). *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Mahāvīrya** – Son of Manyu and father of Urukshaya. *Bhāgavata*

**Mahīdāsa** – A Muni. He was well-versed in the Gjnāna (*science*) of Purusha Yagjna, which confers immortality. Once, suffering from an ailment, he proclaimed "O! Ailment! I am knowledgeable in Purusha Yagjna. Why do you make me suffer? I will not die." The ailment left him. He lived a full life. *Chāndōgya Upanishad*

**Mahisha** – Son of Anuhlāda and his wife Sūrmi. *Bhāgavata*

**Mahishāsura I** – Father of the Asura* Gaja. Mahishāsura was killed by Kumāraswāmi (*son of Lord Ṣiva*). *Vāmana Purāṇa*

**Mahishāsura II** – Once upon a time, a woman, Mahishmati, was a female buffalo due to a Ṣāpa*. This buffalo, while drinking water at a pond, swallowed the semen of a king, Sindhudwīpa.

She became pregnant as a result. The son born to her was the Asura* Mahisha. She was released from her Ṣāpa as soon as the son was born.

Mahisha had been harassing everybody as the Dēvas were incapable of defeating him. Nārada went to the Malaya mountain where Dēvi (*the Supreme Being*) was in the form of Nārāyaṇi. Nārada said to Her "Did you hear about the arrogance of Mahisha? He says he is going to marry you. You should kill him." He then went to Mahisha and said "O! King of the Asuras! What is the value of your youth and sexual prowess if you do not marry Nārāyaṇi, who resides on Malaya mountain? You must somehow marry Her." Mahisha sent a message to Nārāyaṇi asking Her to marry him. This annoyed Dēvi sufficiently that She fought and killed Mahisha. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Mahishāsura III** – Because Indra* (*son of one of Kaṣyapa's wives, Aditi*) had been killing all the sons of Diti (*another wife of Kaṣyapa*), she was performing Tapas* near the Āṣram of Sage Supārṣva, with a view to obtaining a son who could defeat Indra. Unable to bear the heat generated by her Tapas, Supārṣva gave her a Ṣāpa* that she will have a buffalo as a son. But Brahma, pleased by her Tapas, appeared to her and said "Only your son's face will be that of a buffalo. His body will be human."

Mahisha prayed to Lord Ṣiva. When Ṣiva appeared, he asked for a boon that he will not die. Ṣiva told him that death is inevitable to anyone born and asked him to choose some other boon. Mahisha then asked that his death shall not occur at the hands of a man.

All the Asuras were serving Mahisha. Saying the Dēvas had stolen their kingdom, they requested him to defeat the Dēvas and

retrieve their kingdom. Mahisha had been harassing the Dēvas. Knowing that he could be defeated only by a female, they combined their Nārī (*female*) Tēja* and prayed to it. Dēvi emerged from it. The Dēvas gave Her their weapons. Dēvi, riding a lion, fought and killed Mahisha. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Māhishmati** – Daughter of an Asura*, Viprajitti. She had fallen in love with King Sindhudwīpa, and pined away for him while strolling in a forest. Some Munis were causing noise there. Disturbed by their noise and thinking she would chase them a bit, she took the form of a she-buffalo and defiled the pits of their Hōma* fires. One Muni, Ṣambara realized the she-buffalo was a female Asura and gave her a Ṣāpa* that she would remain in that form for one hundred years. Māhishmati begged him to indicate the manner of release from the Ṣāpa. The Muni told her that release from the Ṣāpa would occur when a son is born to her. She was roaming around, as a she-buffalo. One day, Sindhudwīpa happened to see a beautiful woman named Vidyunmati, bathing naked in a lake. He had a spontaneous ejaculation. Following the fragrance of the pheromones from his semen, Māhishmati reached the lake and drank the water in which the semen was mixed. She thereby became pregnant and had a son named Mahishāsura. She was then released from the Ṣāpa. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Māhishmati Pura** – The city of King Nishadha. Due to an agreement he had with Agni (*the Fire God*), women committing adultery there are not considered criminal. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mahōdara I** – A Nāga*. Son of Kadruva. He was a devotee of Lord Ṣiva. Once, Ṣiva sent him to summon Paraṣurāma.

*Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Mahōdara II** – A Muni. When Rāma severed the head of an Asura also named Mahōdara, it stuck to this Muni's foot. However hard it was pulled, it could not be dislodged. The Muni was advised to bathe in a Tīrtha* known as Sarasvati Nauṣana. He did so and the head fell off his foot. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mahōdara III** – An Asura. He served in Rāvaṇa's army. Lord Rāma severed his head. It fell and stuck to the foot of a Muni also named Mahōdara. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Maināka** – A mountain (i*n the Purāṇas, mountains are anthropomorphed into men*). Son of Mēnaka (*different from the Apsara**) and Himavanta. Once, as Indra* was chopping off the wings of mountains, Maināka hid in the southern ocean in fear. When the Vānara* warrior Hanumān was flying over the ocean on his way to Lanka*, Maināka rose up and asked him to rest on him for a while. Hanumān complied with the request. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Maitrāvaruṇa** – Mind-born son of Pulastya. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Maitrēya** – A Muni. During the Pānḍavas' twelve-year Araṇyavāsa (*exile in the forest*), he informed Dhṛtarāshṭra (*their father's older brother*) of their well-being. He also recommended that it is best to become friendly with them and advised that they will be invincible because Lord Kṛshṇa was on their side. Hearing those words, Duryōdhana laughed derisively, slapping his thighs. The Muni, enraged by his rude behaviour, gave him a Ṣāpa* that his thighs will be broken. Dhṛtarāshṭra begged him for his son's release from his Ṣāpa. Matrēya said Duryōdhana will be released from the Ṣāpa

if he becomes sensible. Matrēya also informed Dhṛtarāshṭra of the fact that an Asura* named Kimmīra was killed by Bhīma. Lord Kṛshṇa ordered him to teach the Dharma (*righteous path*) to Vidura (*the other uncle of the Pānḍavas*). Vidura came to him and learnt Tattva (*philosophy*). *Bhāgavata*

**Maitrēyi** – Wife of Yāgjnyavalkya. Intending to break with family ties and go to Tapovana*, he offered to make arrangements for financial support of his wives. Maitrēyi said "However much money you give us, it is not permanent. Instead, teach us knowledge that will make us happy for ever." He taught them Brahma Gjnāna (*knowledge of the Supreme Being*) and went to the forest. *Brahma Purāṇa*

**Makaradhwaja** – Son of King Chandrahāsa of Kerala. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Makarāksha** – Son of the Asura* Khara. He was killed by Rāma in the Rāmāyaṇa war. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Mālāvati I** – Wife of Kuṣadhwaja. Their daughter was Vēdavati (*incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi*). *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Mālāvati II** – Wife of a Gandharva* named Upabarhaṇa. Once, when he saw the Apsara* Rambha, he spontaneously ejaculated. Lord Brahma gave him a Ṣāpa* that he will be born to a Ṣūdra* woman. He died instantly. Mālāvati prayed to the Dēvas to resuscitate her husband. However much she prayed, they did not respond. Finally, she was about to give all the Dēvas a Ṣāpa. Knowing the power she has as a Pativrata*, Brahma and the others sought Lord Vishṇu's help. Vishṇu, in the disguise of a Brahmin boy, approached her and talked to her about time, death, etc. She

kept praying for her husband's return to life. Vishṇu, still disguised as a Brahmin boy, told Brahma that she is a great Pativrata and that it is appropriate to grant her wish. He also warned that if her wish was not fulfilled, she will give a Ṣāpa to all the Dēvas. Sage Nārada then told them that Mālāvati's husband was his own son and that he became Upabarhaṇa due to a Ṣāpa. Nārada added that Upabarhaṇa still had a thousand years of life expectancy and that he himself could bring him back to life with Vishṇu's blessing. The Dēvas went to Mālāvati and revived her husband. Mālāvati lived happily with her husband for many years. He then left his body in accordance with Brahma's Ṣāpa. She took birth as the daughter of King Sṛnjaya, retaining memory of her past life, and chose Upabarhaṇa again, as her husband. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Māḷavi** – Wife of King Aṣvapati and mother of Sāvitri. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Malayadhwaja** – King of the country of Pānḍya. Son of Kulaṣēkhara. His wife was Kānchanamāla. He performed many Yāgas hoping to beget children. A daughter was born to him. She was born with three breasts. As a surprised Malayadhwaja was staring at her, Lord Ṣiva appeared and told him that Goddess Pārvati Herself was born as his daughter and that the third breast will disappear once she gets married. Malayadhwaja fought as an ally of the Pānḍavas in the Mahā Bhārata war. Aṣvatthāma killed him. *Skānda Purāṇa; Mahā Bhārata*

**Māli** – Son of Sukēṣa and brother of Sumāli and Mālyavanta. He married Vasudha, daughter of Narmada, a Gandharva* woman. He had four sons, Anala, Anila, Hara, and Sampāti. As these sons

were committing evil deeds, the Dēvas begged for help from Lord Ṣiva. Ṣiva informed Lord Vishṇu. Learning that Vishṇu had been informed of their antics, they went to war against the Dēvas' city thinking "What is so great about Vishṇu? Can we not defeat Him?" However, they were defeated and returned home. Then, Māli, with the support of Mālyavanta and Sumāli, went to Swarga (*heaven*) and battled Garutmanta*. Lord Vishṇu's Chakra* came to Garutmanta's aid. With its help, Garutmanta was able to kill Māli. Sumāli and Mālyavanta ran away in fear. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Mālini I** – Daughter born to Pramōchana, an Apsara* by Pushkara, a son of Varuṇa (*the God of Rain*). She gave her daughter in marriage to a king named Ruchi. They had a son, Rauchya, who became a Manu*. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Mālini II** – (*Mānini was another name for her*) Wife of King Ṣvētakarṇa. In his old age, he handed the kingdom over to his ministers and went to the forest. His wife, who was pregnant at the time, accompanied him to the forest. She gave birth to a baby boy on a hill, abandoned him there and went away with her husband. The boy was protected by some Munis who named him Ajapārṣva. *Hari Vamṣa*

**Mālini III** – One of three Asura* women sent by Vaiṣravaṇa to serve Viṣravasu. Viṣravasu and Mālini had a son Vibhīshaṇa. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mālini IV** – A lake. It was by the shore of this lake that the Apsara* Mēnaka and Sage Viṣvāmitra left their daughter Ṣakuntala. Sage Kaṇva took her from there to his Āṣram. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mālini V** – The pseudonym used by Draupadi during the Pāṇḍavas' incognito year. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mallikārjuna** – Lord Ṣiva. There was a king named Chandragupta near Ṣrīṣailam (*in Andhra Pradesh, India*). His daughter Chandravati was more beautiful than Ratī Dēvi (*Manmatha's wife, considered to be the standard of feminine beauty*). Even her own father was attracted to her. Unwilling to remain in the body that created mad desire in her own father, she went to Ṣrīṣaila and was singing hymns to Ṣiva. Ṣiva appeared to her. She requested Him to allow her to merge with Him and gave Him a garland of Mallika (*jasmine*) flowers. Ṣiva accepted them. His complexion turned Arjunam (*white*). She asked Him to be known as Mallikārjuna for that reason. (*Ṣrīṣaila Māhātmyam is a 'Sthala Purana'**.) *Ṣrīṣaila Māhātmyam*

**Mālyavanta** – Son of Sukēṣa and his wife Dēvavati. Sumāli and Māli were his brothers. The three of them, hoping to acquire wealth and fame like their father, performed Tapas* directed towards Lord Brahma for many years. Brahma appeared to them and gave them the boons they requested. Thereafter, they arrogantly harassed all the worlds. They summoned Viṣvakarma* and asked him to build a city for them. He told them that he had built the city of Lanka* on the orders of the Asura* king and that they can live there. The three of them went to war on Swarga (*heaven*). Garutmanta* killed Māli. Scared, Mālyavanta ran away to the Pātāḷa (*netherworld*).

Mālyavanta returned to Lanka when his grandson Rāvaṇa was ruling it and became his minister. Rāvaṇa treated him with respect. When Lord Rāma attacked and Rāvaṇa met with his council of

ministers, Mālyavanta strongly advised Rāvaṇa to avoid war and make peace. *Rāmāyaṇa*

Mālyavanta had married Sundari, daughter of a Gandharva* woman named Narmada. They had sons Aniṣakrōdha, Vajramushṭi, Virūpāksha, Durmukha, Suptaghna, Yagjnakōpa, and Unmattaka and daughter Anala. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Mamata** – Wife of Utathya. While she was pregnant, her brother-in-law Bṛhaspati (*the Guru of the Dēvas*) came to her house as a guest and overcome with desire for her, raped her. Her unborn son scolded Bṛhaspati, who then gave the boy a Ṣāpa* that he will be blind. The boy was thus congenitally blind. His name was Dīrghatamas. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mānasa** – A lake in the country of Hāṭaka. Swans live in it. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Manasvini I** – Wife of Mṛkanḍu. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Manasvini II** – Wife of Prajāpati and mother of Sōma. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Manda I** – An Asura* born from the sacred fire of the Hōma* which Sage Chyavana was performing. When Chyavana declared that he would give a share of Havya* to the Aṣvins (*twin physicians to the Dēvas*), Indra* raised his Vajrāyudha (*a thunderbolt, Indra's signature weapon, literally 'weapon of diamond'*) to strike Chyavana. Chyavana caused Manda to be born for the purpose of killing Indra. Manda started swallowing the Dēvas. Terrified by his appearance, Indra begged Chyavana for protection. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Manda II** – Minister of the Vānara* King Sugrīva. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Manda III** – (*Mainda*) Brother of Dvivida. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Māndakarṇi** – A Muni. He had performed great Tapas*. He performed Tapas for one thousand years 'eating' only air and sleeping on stone slabs. The Dēvas, afraid of the effects of his Tapas, sent Pancha (*five*) Apsaras* to disrupt his Tapas. The Muni found a lake in a remote, unpopulated area and enjoyed life with the Apsaras there. Lord Rāma, during His exile in the forest, happened to hear the excited noises of the sex play of the Muni with the divine nymphs. The lake came to be known as Panchāpsara lake due to its use by five Apsaras. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Mandapāla** – A Muni. He strictly practiced Brahmacharya (*celibacy*) for a long time. He left his physical body by the spiritual power of the practice of Yōga. However, he was not allowed to enter Puṇya* Lōka (*the world where virtuous souls spend the after-life*). He asked the Dēvas "I have performed sincere Tapas* for a long time. Why am I not being allowed to enter Puṇya Lōka?" The Dēvas responded that it was impossible for someone to enter Swarga (*heaven*) without having children, however much Tapas one might have performed. Having observed that birds produce offspring faster than other species and desiring to fulfill the requirements for entering Swarga as quickly as possible, Mandapāla chose to become a bird and mated with a female bird named Jarita. They had sons (*articulate birds*) named Jaratāri, Sārasṛku, Āpastambamitra, and Drōṇa. Noticing that Agni (*the Fire God*) was consuming the Khāṇḍava forest where his children were, he prayed to Agni to save them. Agni spared the tree on

which the little birds were, while consuming the rest of the forest. Mandapāla went to check what happened to his family, and relieved to see them alive and safe, went on his way. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mandapragjna** – Once, seeing Bāhuka (*King Nala, turned into an ugly, common man*) pining for his estranged wife, Sudēva (*a friend of Nala*) asked him why he was crying. Bāhuka replied that he had seen a servant named Mandapragjna crying like that and was doing likewise. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mandara I** – A mountain. It was used as the rod for churning the ocean of milk by the Dēvas and Asuras*. After some time, the mountain sank to the bottom of the ocean. The Dēvas prayed to Lord Vishṇu to save the enterprise. He took the form of a giant Kūrma (*tortoise*) and undergirded the mountain and lifted it back into position. *Bhāgavata*

**Mandara II** – A Brahmin. In his previous life, he was a dissolute, promiscuous man named Ajāmiḷa, who consorted with prostitutes. When a great Yōgi (*ascetic*) named Ṛshabha visited his house, he tended to the Yōgi's needs. In his next life, he was born as Bhadrāyu, son of Vajrabāhu. Bhadrāyu's wife, a prostitute named Pingaḷa in a previous life, was born as Kīrtimālini. *Brahmōttara Khanḍa, Skānda Purāṇa*

**Māṇḍavi** – Wife of Daṣaratha's son Bharata (*she and the wives of Rāma's other brothers Lakshmaṇa and Ṣatrughna were all cousins of Sīta, Lord Rāma's Consort*). *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Māṇḍavya** – A Muni. After a long tour of pilgrimage, he was performing Tapas* in a forest near a city. One day, some thieves

stole money from the king and hid in his Āṣram. The king's soldiers, chasing after the robbers, asked him where the robbers went. He did not respond to them. They searched the Āṣram, caught the thieves and saying "You are the robbers' ring-leader disguised as a Muni", they took him also to the king. He was given the punishment of being impaled on a stake. However, he did not only not die, but continued to perform Tapas. Some Munis, taking the form of birds, came to him and asked "What is the reason for this condition of yours?" The king's soldiers heard the question and reported to the king about the visit by birds and the question they asked. The king came running to him, begged his forgiveness and had the soldiers remove the stake. However, the stake could not be completely removed and a wood splinter remained in his shoulder. He thereby acquired the name Aṇimāṇḍavya.

As Kauṣika's wife was carrying him to a rendevous with a prostitute, his foot happened to touch the shoulder of Māṇḍavya who still had open flesh wounds from the punishment. Enraged by the pain of a touch on his open wound, Māṇḍavya cried out a Ṣāpa* that whoever caused his pain by touching his sore shoulder will die before the sun next rises. Kauṣika's wife, hearing his cry and afraid that her husband would die, gave a Ṣāpa that the sun shall rise no more. The sun stopped rising and the world went dark because she was a Pativrata*. Eventually Māṇḍavya died and went to the city of Yama (*where sinners are punished*). Māṇḍavya questioned Yama "Why did you decree such a punishment for me?" Yama told him "When you were a boy, you killed butterflies by impaling them. That sin resulted in your suffering the same fate." Angry with the disproportionate punishment for a minor

transgression, Māṇḍavya gave Yama a Ṣāpa that he would be born as a mortal to a woman of the Ṣūdra* caste. As a result, Yama was born as Vidura (*Sage Vyāsa's son by Ambika's maidservant sent by Ambika, when her mother-in-law wanted her to have another child after the first one turned out to be congenitally blind*). *Mārkaṇḍēya Purāṇa*

Once, he went to King Janaka (*father of Sīta, Consort of Lord Rāma*) and asked to be taught the way to overcome desire. Janaka replied "Happiness is achieved by not pinning hope on anything and that is how I am not sad even though Mithila (*Janaka's capital city*) is burning down. Even Divya Sukha (*divine bliss*) is not as good as the happiness of abandoning desire." *Mahā Bhārata*

**Māndhāta** – Son of Yuvanāṣva. Childless for a very long time and wishing for a son, Yuvanāṣva performed a Putra Kāmēshṭi Yāga*. Sage Bhṛgu consecrated the Yāga Phala (*holy water*) by Mantras and gave it to Yuvanāṣva and asked him to keep it secure. Yuvanāṣva was very thirsty that night (*Yāgas are performed in front of a fire, potentaially causing dehydration*). He was not able to find drinking water or someone to fetch water for him. To slake his thirst, he drank the holy water Sage Bhṛgu entrusted to him. The next morning, looking for the holy water and not finding it where it was secured, the Sage asked Yuvanāṣva what happened to the water. Yuvanāṣva said he drank it. The Sage said "The water was intended for your wives. The power of the water cannot be avoided. You will become pregnant." A boy with great Tējas*, Māndhāta, came out of his stomach, splitting it open (*without harming him*). Indra* came there and gave the baby his finger to suckle.

Māndhāta married Bindumati, daughter of King Ṣaṣibindu. Ambarīsha, Purukutsa, and Muchikunda were his sons. Māndhāta's eldest son Ambarīsha was adopted by his grandfather, Yuvanāṣva. His son was named Yauvanāṣva. Yauvanāṣva had a son named Hārīta. When a Brahmin from the Māndhāta Gōtra announces himself (*such as at his upanayanam**), he will say "I am from the Pravara (*lineage*) of Ambarīsha, Yauvanāṣva, and Hārīta. *Bhāgavata*

A Sage, Saubhari, went to King Māndhāta and asked for his daughters in marriage. Māndhāta told him that his daughters will not like an old man like him. Saubhari said "Let me go to your Antahpura*. I will marry them only if your daughters freely agree to marry me." Saubhari, using his spiritual power obtained by his long Tapas, assumed a very handsome form and went to the Antahpura. All of Māndhāta's daughters fell in love with him. Saubhari married them.

Māndhāta ascended to the throne at the tender young age of twelve. He was waging war against other kings and defeating them. The Asura* King Rāvaṇa, hearing about Māndhāta's conquests, came to him and arrogantly demanded to fight him. Māndhāta defeated and bound Rāvaṇa with ropes. Lord Brahma came, requested Māndhāta to release Rāvaṇa and made peace between them. Swelling with pride on defeating many kings in battle, Māndhāta declared war against Indra. Indra was frightened.

Indra asked him "Have you conquered the whole earth? Why do you consider yourself eligible to fight me?" Indra then told him to defeat the Asura Lavaṇa and then he could come and fight him. Māndhāta accordingly went and attacked Lavaṇa, who defeated

him. He then went to King Vasuhōma and learnt the nature of governance. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mandōdari I** – Daughter of the Asura* Maya*. Her mother was Hēma, a maiden of the Dēvas. Once, as Mandōdari was strolling in the forest with her father, Rāvaṇa who was on a hunt, saw her and fell in love with her. Rāvaṇa approached Maya, greeted and asked about his well-being, informed him that he is the king of Lanka* and that he is unmarried. Maya performed his daughter's marriage with Rāvaṇa. She had sons among whom was Indrajit. Mandōdari was a great Pativrata*.

When Rāvaṇa was preparing to go to war, Mandōdari advised him to try for peace and avoid war, but to no avail. Even after Indrajit was killed in the war, she suggested that he return Sīta to Rāma and beg his forgiveness and that Rāma was actually an incarnation of Lord Vishṇu Himself.

In order to defeat Rāma, Rāvaṇa prepared to perform a Yāga named Pātāḷa Hōma*. If he managed to complete the Yāga, Rāvaṇa would become invincible. Vibhīshaṇa informed Rāma of this secret. Angada and several other Vānaras* were sent to disrupt the Hōma. Angada dragged Rāvaṇa's wife to the Hōma site by her hair. Rāvaṇa, unable to contain his anger, left the Hōma unfinished and rescued his wife. *Rāmāyaṇa*

Once, Rāvaṇa, planning to defeat Munis, requested them to give him a small amount of their blood with the intention of using it to symbolize his victory. He kept the blood he received in a pot. One Muni, Kṛtsnamada, who was planning to perform a Yāga for the purpose of begetting a daughter, kept some milk consecrated by Mantras in a pot. Rāvaṇa obtained that pot of milk. He mixed the

blood he collected with the milk, and gave it to Mandōdari, saying "This is poison; keep it safe." Some time later, Mandōdari was extremely unhappy about her husband's indifference to her and his promiscuous desire for other women. She decided to end her life by drinking the "poison" Rāvaṇa had entrusted to her. When she drank some of the mixture of blood and milk, she became pregnant. Afraid of letting her husband know of her condition, she told him that she was going on a pilgrimage, went to her parents' home and gave birth to a girl. She put the baby in a golden cabinet, buried it in the ground and went home after bathing in the Sarasvati river.

King Janaka found the cabinet while tilling the soil in preparation for a Yāga. *Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa*

**Mandōdari II** – Daughter of King Chandrasēna of the country of Simhaḷa (*ancient Sanskrit name for Śrī Lanka, formerly Ceylon*). Her father intended to give her in marriage to King Kambugrīva of the country of Andhra when she came of marriageable age. She refused to get married. Later, King Vīrasēna of the country of Kōsala saw her and wanted to marry her. Saying she did not want to get married because then she will be subject to the control of another, she refused to marry. Her female companion Chandramati married a king. She then felt like marrying and wed the king of the country of Madra. He took her to his city. After some time, she discovered that he was living with one of his servant maids and felt sad because she lost her freedom without gaining marital bliss and could not stay with her husband. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Māṇḍūkēya** – Disciple of Pyla's disciple Pramiti. He was taught the Samhita* of the Ṛg Vēda. He, in turn, taught it to Dēvamitra.

*Bhāgavata*

**Māṇibhadra I** – General in the army of Kubēra (*the God of Wealth*). When the Asura* Rāvaṇa (*Kubēra's half-brother*) went to war against Kubēra's city of Alakāpura, Rāvaṇa's general Prahasta battled and defeated Māṇibhadra. An arrow from Prahasta caused Māṇibhadra's head to be permanently turned to the side. He thereby came to be known as Pārṣva Mauḷi. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Māṇibhadra II** – A Gandharva*. He was a companion of Kunḍadhāra. Once, a Brahmin came to Kunḍadhāra and said "I am planning to perform a Yāga. Please give me some money." Māṇibhadra asked him "What is the point in giving money to a man? Man's existence itself is temporary. Achieving Divinity by Dharma (*righteous path*) is true wealth." The Brahmin, after hearing his teaching, left without asking for money. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Maṇigrīva** – Son of Kubēra (*the God of Wealth*). *Bhāgavata*

**Maṇimanta** – A Yaksha (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers*). Friend of Kubēra (*the God of Wealth*). Once, while flying around with Kubēra on his Pushpaka (*flying vehicle*), his spit fell on Sage Agastya who gave him a Ṣāpa* that he will die by the hand of a mortal human.

Once, while the Pānḍavas were traveling along the shores of the Ṣvētaki river, Draupadi saw some multicoloured flowers and requested her husbands to bring her some. When Bhīma went to bring her the flowers, Maṇimanta blocked him from picking the flowers. Bhīma killed him in a fight and brought the flowers to Draupadi. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Maṇimatipura** – The city of the Asura* brothers Vātāpi and

Ilvala. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Maṇināga** – Son of Ṣēshu, a Nāga*. He prayed to Lord Ṣiva and received a boon that no harm will come to him from Garutmanta (*the most feared predator of the serpent species*). Once, while he was strolling, Garutmanta caught him in his beak and flew away. Maṇināga then prayed to Ṣiva. Ṣiva sent Nandi (*articulate bullock that is Ṣiva's transport*) to inform Lord Vishṇu of the situation. Vishṇu had Maṇināga released. *Brahma Purāṇa*

**Mānini** – Wife of King Rājyavardhana. One day, while washing his hair, she saw gray hairs. She was saddened that he was getting old prematurely. The citizens of Rājyavardhana's kingdom, learning of the plight of their king, were also saddened. They collectively prayed to Sūrya (*the Sun God, considered to be the source of life and health*) to increase the life expectancy of their monarch. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Maṇipura** – The city of Chitravāhana. Arjuna passed by it during his pilgrimage tour. *Maha Bharata*

**Maṇipushpaka** – The conch (*each great warrior had a conch with a distinct sound, which they used to announce their arrival on the battlefield*) of Sahadēva (*one of the Pānḍava twins*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Maṇivāhana** – Son of Uparicharavasu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Maṇivaktra** – Son of a Vasu named Āpu. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Mankaṇa** – A Muni. Once, when he touched a sprouting soft blade of Darbha (*sacred grass*), a juicy sap flowed from it. Thinking that his Tapas* caused a new phenomenon, he danced

with joy. Other Munis went to Lord Ṣiva and requested Him to make Mankaṇa stop his wild dance. Ṣiva came to Mankaṇa disguised as a Muni and demanded to know why Mankaṇa was dancing. Mankaṇa replied that his touch made the sap flow from grass and that he was dancing to express his pleased surprise on seeing it. Ṣiva then scratched a limb of his body while Mankaṇa was watching. Some gold-like dust rose from the spot. Mankaṇa, astonished at this demonstration, conceded that the visitor was greater than himself and might be the Supreme Being. He begged the other Muni (*Lord Ṣiva*) to help enhance his Tapas.

Once, Mankaṇa saw a woman bathing naked and experienced spontaneous ejaculation. Mankaṇa saved the semen. Seven men were born from his semen. These were the progenitors of the semi-divine beings known as Maruts. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Manki** – A Brahmin. Once, in an effort to earn money, he bought two calves and tied them together with a rope. They ran away, still tied to each other. An elephant stood in their way. The rope tying them together became a noose around their necks by the impact and they died. Manki, seeing the tragic event, realized that desire causes unhappiness and resolved to renounce worldly desires. He was able to renounce all desires and attain the bliss of Mukti*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Manmatha** – Son of Lord Vishṇu. Manmatha was extremely handsome. His wife was Ratī Dēvi. She was born from Manmatha's left torso. His transport is a parrot. He was the God of Love (*Manmatha means 'he who churns the mind'*) Flowers such as Aravinda are his arrows (*anyone hit by a flower arrow of Manmatha will be sexually aroused by anyone of the opposite sex*

*in the vicinity*). One of his arrows disturbed Lord Brahma Himself. He had sex with His own daughter, Sarasvati. Ashamed by what He did and blaming Manmatha for it, He gave Manmatha a Ṣāpa* that he will soon be burned to ashes. Manmatha prayed to Brahma for forgiveness who told him he will be reborn in the Yadu dynasty. *Matsya Purāṇa*

Once upon a time, the Asura* Tāraka was creating extreme havoc. Brahma gave him a boon but could not control him. Brahma revealed that defeating him was beyond the ability of anyone other than an offspring of Ṣiva. At the time, Ṣiva was unmarried (*following the self-immolation of His Consort Sati*) and performing Tapas*. Indra* summoned Manmatha, praised him and requested that he somehow make Ṣiva marry Pārvati. Manmatha, confident in his prowess to induce romantic love, went to where Ṣiva was performing Tapas. Pārvati was nearby. Manmatha hit Ṣiva with his arrow. Ṣiva lost His concentration. Angry at whoever caused His mind to wander away from Tapas, He opened His (*third*) eye and looked at Manmatha. Manmatha was burned to ashes. He was reborn as Lord Kṛshṇa's son Pradyumna. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Manōhara** – Wife of a Vasu named Sōma. Their sons were Varchas, Ṣiṣira, Prāṇa, and Ramaṇa. Pṛtha was their daughter. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Manōjava** – Son of a Vasu named Anila. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Manōrama I** – Girl born from the left side of the torso of Kubēra (*the God of Wealth*). She became Kubēra's wife. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Manōrama II** – Daughter of Vīrasēna and wife of King Dhruvasindhu. When her son Sudarṣana was about to be coronated, the father of a Sapatni* came and demanded that his grandson be crowned instead. Vīrasēna fought and was killed by him. Manōrama took her son with her to the Āṣram of Bhāradvāja. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Manthara** – Maidservant of Kaikēyi (*youngest and favourite wife of King Daṣaratha*). Hearing the news of the impending coronation of Rāma, she rushed to Kaikēyi and said "O! Queen! Your husband is preparing to coronate your stepson Rāma as the crown prince. If Rāma ascends to the throne, you will become a servant of his mother, Kausalya. Why are you keeping quiet and looking happy?" At least initially, Kaikēyi rejected Manthara's counsel. Manthara did not give up her effort and described in gory detail all the humiliations Kaikēyi will suffer if her son Bharata does not ascend to the throne. She reminded Kaikēyi that Daṣaratha had, in the past, offered her two boons and suggested that she should use one to exile Rāma to the forest for fourteen years and the second one to have Bharata coronated as the crown prince. Kaikēyi eventually succumbed to Manthara's evil advice. When Daṣaratha came to her chambers to invite her to the celebration, she lay in bed, fully covered with a blanket, and would not speak with him. Daṣaratha pleaded with her for a response. She then said "I know you vowed never to break a promise. I want the two boons you had offered me, now" She then stated the two wishes Manthara had suggested. *Rāmāyaṇa*

In a previous life, Manthara was a Gandharva* woman named Dundubhi. She was born as Kaikēyi's maidservant on the orders of

Lord Brahma to facilitate a divine purpose. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mānushāda** – A bull. Kettle-drums made from his hide were placed on the peak of a mountain named Chaitraka near the city of the Asura* Jarāsandha and automatically sounded if any outsider entered the city (*early warning system*). *Bhāgavata*

**Manyu** – Son of Bharadvāja. His sons included Bhaya, Mahāvīrya, Nara, and Garga. Rantidēva was his grandson. *Bhāgavata*

**Mārīcha** – Son of Tāṭaka and Sunanda. He received a Ṣāpa* from Munis including Sanaka and Sanandana to take this incarnation. He was Jita (*servant of Jaya and Vijaya, brothers who were gate-keepers of Vaikunṭha, Lord Vishṇu's abode*) in a previous life.

Once, Sunanda and Mārīcha, feeling hungry, tried to swallow Sage Agastya. The Sage gave them a Ṣāpa that they will become Asuras. Since then, Tāṭaka and Sunanda acted like Asuras, harassing Brahmins and destroying the Yāgas of Munis. Mārīcha was in the service of Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa planned to abduct Sīta and ordered Mārīcha to assist him in the scheme. Mārīcha was to create a distraction and draw Rāma and Lakshmaṇa far from their cottage. Mārīcha was uncomfortable about the plan and said "Rāma is not an ordinary man. Do not try to cause harm to him. If you do, we will not live. Give up the plan to abduct Sīta." Not only did Rāvaṇa not heed his advice, he threatened to punish Mārīcha just for speaking up. Realizing he could not avoid death and preferring to be killed by Rāma, Mārīcha used his Asura magic to take the form of a golden deer, made sure that Rāma and Sīta saw him and ran far away. Rāma went chasing after the golden deer. Mārīcha's aim was only to facilitate Rāvaṇa's abduction of Sīta by

drawing Rāma away from Her. Finally, the deer was hit by Rāma's arrow. With his last breath, Mārīcha cried "O! Lakshmaṇa!" Sīta and Lakshmaṇa, in the Parṇa Ṣāla (*cottage*), heard the cry. Mārīcha assumed his real form and died. Mārīcha's son was Kālanēmi. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Marīchi** – Lord Brahma's mind-born son. He married Kaḷa, a daughter of Kardama. His son was Kaṣyapa. Marīchi had another wife, Sambhūti. *Mahā Bhārata; Bhāgavata*

Marīchi married Dharmavrata, daughter of Dharma. Once, while her husband slept, Dharmavrata was massaging his feet. Brahma arrived at their place while Marīchi was still asleep. She was in a quandary since it was her duty as the hostess and the daughter-in-law to greet and welcome Brahma but it would be a sin to stop massaging her husband's tired feet. After thinking long and hard, she decided to greet her father-in-law, and stopped massaging her husband's feet. Marīchi then woke up, and annoyed that his wife stopped massaging his feet and was tending to another, gave her a Ṣāpa* that she would become a stone. Furious at being given a Ṣāpa unfairly, she countered with a Ṣāpa of her own that Marīchi shall be incinerated by the third eye of Lord Ṣiva. *Vāyu Purāṇa*

Varsha was Marīchi's wife in the first Yuga (*epoch*). Six sons were born to them then. The sons laughed scornfully when they saw Lord Brahma having sex with His own daughter Sarasvati. Brahma gave them a Ṣāpa that they will be born to Asura women. Due to the Ṣāpa, they were born as the sons of Hiraṇyakaṣipu and in another epoch, as the sons of Dēvaki (*killed by her brother Kamsa*). *Bhāgavata*

**Mārisha I** – A woman. In a previous life, she became a widow

while still very young (*before experiencing conjugal bliss*). She prayed to Lord Vishṇu and driven by unfulfilled sexual desire, requested 'husbands' as a boon.

When a Muni, Kantha, was performing Tapas*, Indra* sent an Apsara*, Pramlōchana, to disrupt his Tapas. Kantha promptly fell in love with her. He married her and they indulged in sex for several years. When Pramlōchana became pregnant Kantha suddenly regretted his downfall and became very angry with her. She was very scared and his semen formed like sweat on her skin. She tried to wipe it off with tender leaf branches. A girl named Mārisha was born from the semen. Chandra (*the Moon God*) nourished her by letting her suck on his index finger.

Once, eleven brothers named Prachētasas started to burn down trees. Chandra then came to them and said "Please stop destroying trees. There is a daughter of trees named Mārisha. I will give her to you. Marry her." All eleven Prachētasas married her. She had a son Daksha (*different from Lord Ṣiva's father-in-law*), and a daughter Chandravati. *Vishṇu Purāṇa; Matsya Purāṇa*

**Mārisha II** – Wife of the Yādava King Dēvamīḍha, who was also known as Ṣūra. Vasudēva (*father of Lord Kṛshṇa*) was one of their sons and Pṛtha (*original name of Kunti, mother of the three eldest Pānḍavas*) was one of their daughters. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mārkanḍēya** – Son of Sage Mṛkanḍu and his wife Manasvini. Mārkanḍēya was principled and disciplined. Mṛtyu (*death*) had him in its bonds and was pulling him. He fought death and performed Tapas* for ten thousand years. Afraid he might lose his position, Indra*, as he usually did, sent Apsaras* to disrupt his Tapas. Mārkanḍēya did not lose his concentration on the Tapas.

Lord Vishṇu appeared before him. Mārkanḍēya asked that he shall live with that body for several Yugas (*epochs*). Vishṇu gave him his wish. Even when the whole world was under water during the Praḷaya (*deluge*), he was alive. As Lord Vishṇu was resting on a Vaṭa Patra (*peepul leaf*) on the surface of the ocean, he greeted Him with a Namaskāra*, entered His body and roamed around inside for many years. He came out and tried to hug Vishṇu. Vishṇu disappeared.

Mārkanḍēya returned to his Āṣram and was performing Tapas. Lord Ṣiva appeared to him. Ṣiva gave him a boon that death will never come to him. Mārkanḍēya's wife was Dhūmrāvati. They had a son Vēdaṣira.

Sage Jaimini once came to Mārkanḍēya and asked questions such as "How did Draupadi become the wife of all five Pānḍavas?" Mārkanḍēya told him "It is time for my silent chanting of Mantras (*Japa*). Go ask Pingāksha and other birds." *Bhāgavata; Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

While the Pānḍavas were in exile in the forest, Mārkanḍēya went to see Dharmarāja and narrated ancient tales and explained the Dharma (*righteous path*) to him.

A king, Indradyumna, used to reside in Indra Lōka (*heaven, abode of Indra and the Dēvas*). As his fame was fading in time, the Dēvas told him that he is not eligible to stay in heaven any longer and asked him to return to earth. He came to earth and found everything there to be unfamiliar. He went to Mārkanḍēya and asked him, "Do you know me?" Mārkanḍēya replied that he did not, and said, "There is someone older than me, an owl named Prākārakarṇa, who might know you". *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mārtāṇḍa I** – He was born when the egg that is the Brahmāṇḍa (*universe*) 'died' (*split into two*). He thus became known as Mārtāṇḍa (*Mṛta [dead] Aṇḍa [egg]*). *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Mārtāṇḍa II** – Once upon a time, Diti's sons (*Daityas or Asuras**) were harassing the Dēvas (*Aditi's sons*) by stealing the Havya*. Unhappy that her sons were starving, Aditi prayed to Sūrya (*the Sun God*). Sūrya was pleased and appeared before her. She requested that she should beget a son with Sūrya's attributes who could protect the Dēvas. One of Sūrya's rays, named Sushumna, entered Aditi's womb and Aditi became pregnant. Aditi was observing fasts even after she became pregnant. Kaṣyapa questioned her as to why she was fasting while pregnant and accused her of destroying the egg in her womb. Aditi became angry and cast out the egg from her womb. A boy was then born and was named Mārtāṇḍa. Many Asuras burned to death, unable to withstand the Tējas* emanating from Mārtāṇḍa. *Mārkaṇḍēya Purāṇa*

**Mārtāṇḍa III** – Once Viṣvakarma*, while performing Tapas*, created a girl who was a Kāmarūpiṇi (*had the ability to assume any form she chose*) who would enable him to perform Yāgas and attain Mukti*. Her name was Surabhi. He also created a Tējōmaya (*full of Tējas**) man. The man felt so much lust for Surabhi that he was in Ārti (*agony*). Lord Brahma came and said to him "Mārtō Bhava" (*Be free from agony*). To free him from the agony of his lust, He gave him the girl in marriage. He came to be known as Mārtāṇḍa ever since. The Ēkādaṣa (*eleven*) Rudras were born to Mārtāṇḍa and Surabhi. Brahma also gave them a boon that their descendants, called Saurabhēyas, will provide milk for Yāgas and

other holy rituals and live in Brahma Lōka (*Brahma's abode*) which will be known as Gō Lōka. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Marut I** – (*Maru*) A descendant of Kuṣa (*one of Lord Rāma's twin sons*). Son of Ṣīghra. He had attained Yōga Siddhi (*final beatitude*).

He and Dēvāpi, brother of Ṣantanu, would live in the village of Kalāpa and using their spiritual Yōga power, ensure proper flow of water at the end of the Kali Yuga (*epoch*). His son was Praṣuṣukra. *Bhāgavata*

**Marut II** – A king. Son of Avīkshit and his wife Viṣāla. When Marut was born, Tumbura came and proclaimed that all the Maruts (*Wind Gods*) will bless the boy. He was named Marut for that reason. Marut worshipped Chandra (*the Moon God*) for sixty years for food. The food he obtained was inexhaustible, no matter how many people ate for however long. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

Marut was virtuous and had wealth comparable to Indra's*. His fame had spread to the ends of the earth. Indra became jealous of him. Marut was planning a Yāga. Indra, per his habit, planned to disrupt it. He went to Bṛhaspati (*the Guru of the Dēvas*) and said jokingly "You officiate as the priest of Yāgas for the Dēvas. If humans invite you, will you go?" Later, Marut went to Bṛhaspati and requested him to be the Upadrashṭa (*priest*) for his Yāga. Bṛhaspati declined the invitation. Marut did not know that Indra had spoken to Bṛhaspati about the subject and he was saddened by the rejection. Sage Nārada visited Marut and suggested that he get Samvarta, the younger son of Angirasa (*and brother of Bṛhaspati*) as the Upadrashṭa. He added "Samvarta is roaming the streets of Kāṣi* like a mad man. You should hang a dead body to the city's

entrance gate. Know the one who runs away on seeing it as Samvarta. If he asks to know who gave you this clue, tell him that Nārada told you. If he asks where Nārada is now, tell him he entered Agni (*fire*)." So saying, Nārada left. Marut followed Nārada's instructions to the letter and found Samvarta. In response to Marut's request, Samvarta said "Indra and my older brother Bṛhaspati will try to disrupt your Yāga. If you do not complete the Yāga for any reason, I will give you a Ṣāpa*. Take this into account in deciding whether to use me." Marut confirmed that he fully intends to complete the Yāga. Marut, with a view to obtaining gold for the Yāga, then went to the Himālaya mountain where Lord Ṣiva had performed Tapas*, dug for and collected gold in bags and paved the Yāga hall with it. Hearing of the splendid arrangements for Marut's Yāga, Bṛhaspati felt humiliated. Indra consoled him and sent Agni (*the Fire God*) to disrupt the Yāga. Agni went to Marut and advised him to request only Bṛhaspati to be the Upadrashṭa. Marut not only declined his advice but threatened to burn Agni if he ever returned. Indra then sent a Gandharva* to Marut with a message that Marut should not perform the Yāga and that if he persists in performing one, Indra will launch the Vajrāyudha (*a thunderbolt, Indra's signature weapon, literally 'weapon of diamond'*) against Marut. Marut ignored Indra's threat. Samvarta, using the power of his Mantras, made Indra and the Dēvas attend the Yāga and receive their share of Havya*. Indra was so pleased by the Sura (*liquor or nectar*) that he turned every object used in the Yāga to gold.

While Marut was performing his Yāga, Rāvaṇa came there and said "Why do you give all portions of Havya to the Dēvas. Either

give me a portion or fight me." Marut rose, preparing to fight. The Munis present, however, advised him that that will cause disruption of the Yāga, and stopped him. Marut buried the wealth in excess of what the attending Brahmins took. When Dharmarāja performed a Yāga, his brothers Bhīma and Arjuna took this wealth to him.

Marut married Prabhāvati, daughter of Vīra; Sukēṣini, daughter of Māgadha; Kaikēyi, daughter of Kēkaya (*different from Rāma's aunt*); Sairandhri, daughter of Surandhra; Pushpavati, daughter of the king of Sindhu; and Suṣōbhana, daughter of the king of Chēdi. He had several sons, including Narishyanta. Tṛṇabindu was of the lineage of his son Dama. *Bhāgavata*

While Marut was king, Nāgas* would come up from Nāga Lōka and harass his people including killing many Munis. The people clamored for relief from the Nāgas. Marut deployed a weapon, Samvartāna Astra, to cause Nāga Lōka to burn. The Nāgas came and begged Viṣāla (*Marut's mother*). She told her husband, Avīkshit, of the situation. Avīkshit advised his son to stop the genocide of the Nāgas. Marut rejected his father's advice. The disagreement caused fighting between father and son. Munis came and pacified them by announcing that the Munis killed by the Nāgas had been brought back to life and that it is appropriate to let the serpents live because they sought protection. Narishyanta became king after Marut. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa; Mahā Bhārata*

**Maruts** – Divine beings. Sons of Diti and her husband Kaṣyapa. Indra* kept killing Diti's sons. She started trying to propitiate her husband with a view to bearing a son who would be capable of killing Indra. Pleased with her efforts, Kaṣyapa offered her a boon.

She asked for a boon that would give her a son powerful enough to defeat Indra. Even though her request saddened him, he agreed to grant her wish (*those with the spiritual power to grant boons felt that once they offer a boon, they cannot violate their promise regardless of the nature of the wish*). Indra learnt of the granting of this boon and also that Diti was pregnant again. Terrified at the prospect of the birth of a powerful enemy, Indra planned to prevent the event. Assuming the form of a young boy, he approached Diti and offered to be her servant and perform any chores with which she asked him to help her. She came to trust her boy servant implicitly. One day, he found her sleeping in the middle of the day. Indra entered her womb and cut the fetus up into seven pieces. Each of the pieces started to cry. Indra further cut each of the seven pieces into seven pieces. Hearing the cries from her womb, Diti woke up and cried, "Do not kill my unborn babies!" Indra then showed himself and apologised for his actions but asserted that any available means can be used to kill one's enemy. Diti turned her sons from that pregnancy over to Indra himself and asked him to take care of them. These became Dēvas and were named Maruts. *Brahma Purāṇa; Matsya Purāṇa*

**Maryāda I** – Wife of Avāchīna and mother of Arihu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Maryāda II** –King Vidēha's daughter and wife of Dēvātithi. Their son was Ṛchīka. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mātali** – Driver of Indra's* elephant. He had a daughter, Guṇakēṣi. Mātali expressed his intention to give his daughter Guṇakēṣi in marriage to Sumukha, grandson of a Nāga* king

named Āryaka and asked Āryaka. Āryaka told him Garutmanta* had killed his son and announced that he will kill Sumukha within a month. Āryaka said he will not perform his grandson's marriage because he is not going to live long. Mātali informed Indra. Indra and Lord Vishṇu assured that Sumukha will live long. Mātali then gave his daughter Guṇakēṣi in marriage to Sumukha. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Matanga** – A Muni who performed Tapas* on the Ṛṣyamūka mountain. When the Vānara* King Vāli killed Dundubhi and tossed his body in the air, blood spurted from the corpse and fell on Matanga. The Muni angrily gave Vāli a Sāpa* that if he ever set foot on the mountain, he would die instantly. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Matanga Muni** – Father of Prasanna, who was the husband of Arjuniki, daughter of Dharmavyādha. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Mathu** – An Asura*. He performed Tapas on the banks of the Yamuna river directed towards Lord Vishṇu (*Ādi Dēva, meaning the "original God"*) and attained Siddhi (*final beatitude*). That place came to be known as Mathurā Nagar. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Mati** – Daughter of Dharaṇi and Daksha Prajāpati*. The Manu* Dharma married her. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Matināra** – Son of Ṛksha. He performed Tapas* for twelve years sitting by the banks of the Sarasvati river (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*). The river fell in love with him and requested him to marry her. Matināra and Sarasvati river had a son Trasa. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Matsya Avatāra** – When Vaivasvata Manu* was performing his

morning ablutions, a tiny (*articulate*) fish fell into his open palms. The fish cried out "Save me! Save me!" The Manu put the fish in a pot of water. By the next morning, the fish had grown to a length of sixteen inches. The fish cried out "Save me!" again so the Manu put it in a well. By the next day, the fish had grown as big as the well and the Manu put it in a pond. By the next day, the fish had grown larger than the pond and again cried out "Save me!". Manu then put it in the ocean. Amazed and concerned at the tremendous rate at which the fish was growing, the Manu asked "Are you an Asura*? Are you Īṣvara? (*both a generic name for God and one of Lord Ṣiva's names*) Your history is amazing. Who are you?" The fish replied that He was Vishṇu, and that a great deluge is about to submerge the whole world in about a hundred years. He also directed the Manu to put the essence of every thing and the Vēdas in a boat and tie the boat to His horn, gave him a boat and disappeared. When the deluge came, Manu did as instructed. After the end of the deluge, the world and all the beings and objects were reconstituted from the saved essence.

At another time, an Asura named Hayagrīva (*or Sōmaka*) stole all four Vēdas and hid with them in the ocean. Lord Vishṇu took the form of a fish (*Matsya Avatāra, the first of the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu*), killed the Asura and saved the Vēdas. *Matsya Purāṇa; Bhāgavata*

**Matsya Gandhi** – (*literally, 'smelling of fish'*) A girl born to a fish (*an Apsara* that was turned into a fish by a Ṣāpa**) in the Yamuna river by the semen of Uparicharavasu (see **Adrika**). When a fisherman cast a net in the Yamuna river, this fish was caught in the net. When the belly of the fish was cut open, the baby girl and

a baby boy (see **Matsyarāja**) were found inside. The fisherman gave both as a gift to the chief of fishermen, Dāṣarāja. She was named Satyavati. Being raised in the house of Dāṣarāja, she was piloting a boat for hire in the river. Sage Parāṣara, on a pilgrimage, saw her and felt desire for her. Alleviating her concern that satisfying the Sage's desire would be improper without her father giving her in marriage and for loss of virginity before marriage, the Sage made love to her after giving her a boon that her virginity will remain intact. Vyāsa was born to her as a result. The Sage gave her another boon that her body will emit a pleasant scent that will reach out to a Yōjana (*ten miles*) all around her. She acquired the names Yōjana Gandhi and Gandhavati.

One day, King Ṣantanu saw her on the banks of the Yamuna river and fell in love with her. When he expressed his feelings for her and asked who she was, she told him "I am the daughter of Dāṣarāja. I cannot marry anyone except the one my father chooses for me." Ṣantanu went to Dāṣarāja and asked for his daughter's hand in marriage. Dāṣarāja told Ṣantanu that if he promises to make Satyavati's son succeed him as the king, he can marry his daughter. Unable to make such a promise in view of the fact that he already had a grown son by his earlier marriage to Ganga, Ṣantanu was depressed and sad. His son Bhīshma, on learning the reason for his father's distress, went to Dāṣarāja and vowed that he will not seek to succeed to the throne and that he will ensure that Matsyagandhi's son will become Ṣantanu's successor (*and that he will remain a bachelor for life to make sure that he will have no sons that might seek the throne either*). Dāṣarāja then performed Matsyagandhi's marriage to Ṣantanu.

At his father's request, Bhīshma promised to protect the honour and good repute of the Kuru empire regardless of who the ruler was. This was the driving principle of Bhīshma's life and the prism through which his actions and failures to take action must be seen to be understood. The father was highly pleased and granted a boon to Bhīshma of Svacchanda Maraṇa (*that death will come to him only when he wishes*). Satyavati had two sons, Chitrāngada and Vichitravīrya. A Gandharva* also named Chitrāngada, killed her son Chitrāngada. Vichitravīrya, though married to Ambika and Ambālika, also died childless. Satyavati, worried that the Kuru dynasty would end, wanted Bhīshma to beget children. But he clung to his vow of celibacy and declared that he cannot go back on his vow. In order to prolong the Kuru dynasty on a permanent basis befitting Kshātra Dharma (*the duty of a royal dynasty*), he decided upon a way according to the Ṣāstras. He explained to her other instances, gave precedents, convinced her citing the example of Dīrghatama and made her agree to the Kshētraja* procedure. Thereafter, Ambika and Ambālika were impregnated by Sage Vyāsa and gave birth respectively to Dhṛtarāshṭra and Pānḍu Rāja.

After some time, hearing Sage Vyāsa's prediction that the sons of Pānḍu and the sons of Dhṛtarāshṭra will be enemies and that there will be trouble as a result, she left the city and went to the Tapōvana with Ambālika and Ambika. *Maha Bharata*

In her previous life, she was Acchōda. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Matsyarāja** – A boy born to a fish (*an Apsara* that was turned into a fish by a Ṣāpa**) in the Yamuna river by the semen of Uparicharavasu (see **Adrika**). When a fisherman cast a net in the Yamuna river, this fish was caught in the net. When the belly of the

fish was cut open, he and his sister Matsya Gandhi were found inside. The fisherman gave both as gifts to the chief of fishermen, Dāṣarāja. He succeeded Dāṣarāja as the king of the country of Matsya Dēṣa. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Matsyas** – (*fish*) Once, an Agni (*fire*) named Adbhuta Nāma, tired after carrying Havya* to the Dēvas for a long time, delegated the task to one Atharva and hid in the ocean. The Dēvas were searching everywhere for him. The fish revealed that the Agni was hiding among them. Furious with the Matsyas, Adbhuta Nāma gave them a Ṣāpa* that people will kill them without mercy. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Maudgalya I** – A Muni. His wife was Indrasēna. Even though her husband was stricken with leprosy and emitted a foul odor, she served him devotedly. Pleased by her total devotion, Maudgalya offered to give her any boon she wants. She told him that she has an intense desire for sexual pleasure and asked him to transform himself into five handsome and virile men by using the power of his Tapas* and have sex with her. Maudgalya did as she wished and enjoyed sex with her with his five bodies, touring all over heaven and earth for many years. Afterwards, he left her and returned to perform Tapas and attained a place in Brahma Lōka (*Lord Brahma's abode*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Maudgalya II** – Disciple of Ṣākalya. He taught the Samhita* of the Ṛg Vēda he had learnt, to Jātukarṇi. *Bhāgavata*

**Maya** – An Asura*. No greater sculptor than him ever existed. In the amazing palace he had built for the Pāṇḍavas, he created the illusion of water in a dry location and the appearance of a dry

surface in a pool of water. Duryōdhana suffered humiliation by mistaking both. When Sālva (*with revenge against Lord Kṛshṇa in mind*) prayed to Lord Ṣiva, Maya*, per Ṣiva's direction, built for him Saubhaka, a flying vehicle that would instantly go wherever Sālva wished to go. Together with his troops and allies, Sālva attacked Dwāraka (*Kṛshṇa's city in the middle of the ocean*). While Maya used the magical powers Asuras possessed, he did not share the cruelty most Asuras did. Maya built the Tripura (*three cities that could fly wherever the owners wished to go*) for the Asuras. Maya's son was an Asura named Vyōma. *Bhāgavata*

Brother of the Asura Namuchi. He lived in the Khāṇḍava forest. When Agni (*the Fire God*) was consuming the forest, he was unable to escape and entered the home of Takshaka. He sought Arjuna's protection then. Arjuna saved him and took him to Dharmarāja. When he offered to show his gratitude for saving his life by giving the Pāṇḍavas whatever they wished for, Kṛshṇa suggested that he create a unique Sabha (*court*) for them. Maya built one and gave it to the Pāṇḍavas. He also gave a mace to Bhīma. He gave Arjuna the conch (*each great warrior had a conch with a distinct sound, which they used to announce their arrival on the battlefield*) Dēvadatta. Earlier, he had gathered together and saved in the Bindu lake, objects studded with precious stones, intending to build a Sabha for an Asura king named Vṛshaparva. He used those objects in building the Sabha for Dharmarāja. He had eight thousand Asuras carry the Sabha he built for the Pāṇḍavas to its location. *Mahā Bhārata*

Son of Kaṣyapa and Danu, one of his wives. He became the sculptor and architect to the Asuras. The Dēvas, pleased by Maya's

qualities, gave him a girl named Hēma. Maya built a great city in her name. Sons named Māyāvi and Dundubhi and a daughter named Mandōdari were born to them. After some time, the Dēvas called Hēma back. She left her husband and children and returned to Swarga.

After Hēma left him, Maya lost interest in worldly affairs and intending to go to Tapōvana* after getting his daughter married, he was strolling in a forest with her, where they encountered Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa approached them and inquired as to who they were. He introduced himself as the ruler of Lanka* and a bachelor. Maya gave his daughter to Rāvaṇa in marriage. He also gave Rāvaṇa some additional magical powers. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Māyāvati** – After Manmatha was incinerated by the third eye of Lord Ṣiva, his wife Ratī Dēvi was looking forward to his rebirth. Sage Nārada informed her that Manmatha would be reborn as Pradyumna (*son of Lord Kṛshṇa*), be abducted by the Asura* Ṣambara and thrown in the ocean to be swallowed by a fish. She disguised herself as a servant, took the name Māyāvati and entered service in Ṣambara's household. The fishermen who caught the fish, feeling it was so large that only their ruler should have it, delivered it to the Ṣambara household. When Māyāvati cut open the fish, she saw a baby boy inside. Sage Nārada came and revealed to her that the infant is none other than Pradyumna. Māyāvati secretly raised the infant she removed from the stomach of the fish. As he matured, he found Māyāvati's behaviour toward him, as if she was his wife, incongruous (*having assumed that she was his mother*) and questioned her about it. She revealed to him everything that happened since he, as Manmatha, was burnt by

Ṣiva's third eye, including the fact that Ṣambara would try to kill him if the Asura discovered his true identity. Pradyumna, learning a Mantra named "Sarva Ṣatru Māyā Vināṣini" (*Sanskrit for 'destroyer of any enemy's evil magic'*), killed Ṣambara. She then flew along with him to Dwāraka. *Bhagavata*

(*Alternate version*) Daughter of the Asura Ṣambara. One day, when she cut a fish open, she was stunned to see a live boy inside. Sage Nārada arrived just then and told her that the boy was Pradyumna, son of Lord Kṛshṇa. Ṣambara, happening to overhear this, came to kill the boy. A fight ensued between Ṣambara and the boy. Ṣambara was killed by Pradyumna. Māyāvati fell in love with Pradyumna and took him to Dwāraka. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Māyāvi I** – Son of the Asura* Dundubhi. The Vānara* King Vāli had killed Dundubhi. Māyāvi, seeking revenge for his father's death, challenged Vāli to a fight. After losing to Vāli, he hid in a cave. Vāli followed him into the cave and killed him there. Vāli's younger brother Sugrīva who was outside the cave, saw streams of blood coming out of the cave. Assuming that it was Vāli that had died, Sugrīva, in fear of the Asura, blocked the cave entrance with a rock and returned to the city. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Māyāvi II** – Son of the Asura* Maya*. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Mayūradhwaja** – King of the city of Maṇipura. His son Tāmradhwaja captured the horse of Dharmarāja's Aṣvamēdha Yāga*. Unable to defeat him and recover the horse, Kṛshṇa and Arjuna went to Mayūradhwaja disguised as Brahmins (*because, by the protocols of the time, no one from the warrior Kshatriya caste would dare to refuse to fulfill any request by a Brahmin*).

Mayūradhwaja greeted them with a Namaskāra* and asked "Why did you come here? What do you want? I will give you anything you want." Then Kṛshṇa said "O! King! On our way here, a lion grabbed my son. I begged it to eat me and release my son, but the lion demanded half of the king's body. I am telling you this because you promised to give us anything we wanted." Mayūradhwaja's wife, on hearing this, said "I am half of my husband. Give me to the lion." Tāmradhwaja offered himself. But Kṛshṇa said "The lion specified that the king's body should be cut in half by his wife and son." Mayūradhwaja ordered them to do as the lion wanted. His wife and son were cutting one half of his body. Tears started flowing from the eye in the other half of the body. Seeing that, Kṛshṇa said "O! King! We cannot accept your donation given in sadness. We will leave." Mayūradhwaja then said "O! Great Brahmin! You do not understand. One half of my body is blessed by being donated to a Brahmin. The eye in the other half is crying because that half of the body is not similarly blessed." Kṛshṇa was pleased and revealed His true form. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Mēdha** – Daughter of Dharaṇi and her husband Daksha Prajāpati*. One of the wives of the Manu* Dharma. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mēdhātithi I** – Son of Priyavrata, king of Plakshadwīpa. His sons were Ṣānta, Bhaya, Ṣiṣira, Sukhōdaya, Ṣiva, Kshēmaka, and Dhruva. *Brahma Purāṇa*

**Mēdhātithi II** – Son of Kaṇva (*different from the foster father of Ṣakuntala*). His son was Praskandha. *Bhāgavata*

**Mēdhātithi III** – Father of Chirakāri. One day, Mēdhātithi was

very angry with his wife and ordered his son to kill her immediately. Chirakāri pondered on the fact that killing his mother is a great sin but it is wrong to disobey his father, too. He took all day to consider what he should do. In the meantime, Mēdhātithi's anger subsided. He went to his son, worried that he may have obeyed him and killed his mother. He was happy that his son did not follow through on his order and that no harm occurred to his reputation or his Tapas*, and his son was free of sin. *Bhāgavata*

**Mēdhāvi** – Son of a Muni named Bāladhi. Having lost many sons before him, Bāladhi prayed to the Dēvas for a son with a long life and got such a son. Arrogant with the knowledge that he was going to live long, Mēdhāvi used to be rude to the Munis. When he joined a Muni named Dhanushāksha and spoke arrogantly to him, the Muni sent him to the city of Yama (i.e., *killed him*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mēdini** – When Lord Vishnu killed the Asuras Madhu and Kaiṭabha, their Mēdhas (*marrow*) fell in the water and became the earth. As a result, the earth came to be known as Mēdini. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Mēghahāsa** – Son of Rāhu (*one of the Nava Grahas*). He performed Tapas* on the banks of the Gautami river to protect his father. *Brahma Purāṇa*

**Mēghasandhi** – Grandson of Jarāsandha. Son of Sahadēva (*not one of the Pānḍavas*). His capital was Rājagṛhapura. *Mahā Bhārata;Bhāgavata*

**Mēghavarṇa** – Son of Ghaṭōtkacha (*son of Bhīma, by his Asura* wife Hiḍimbi, each of the Pānḍavas had at least one wife he did*

*not share with his brothers, in addition to Draupadi, shared by all five*). When King Yauvanāṣva captured Dharmarāja's Aṣvamēdha Yāga* horse, he accompanied Bhīma to Yauvanāṣva's city to retrieve the horse. The Yāga horse was there with Yauvanāṣva protecting it. While Bhīma was worried because he could not see a way to get the horse back, Mēghavarṇa used his Asura magic to steal the horse. When he realized what happened, Yauvanāṣva came to fight. A battle occurred. Finally, Yauvanāṣva gave up the horse. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Mēnaka I** – An Apsara*. Daughter of Kapila, one of the wives of Kaṣyapa. Indra*, as he usually did, used to send her (*and other Apsaras*) to disrupt the Tapas* of any Muni he considered a threat to his position. In this manner, she had a daughter Ṣakuntala by Sage Viṣvāmitra. She left her daughter and returned to Swarga (*heaven*). She had another daughter, Pramadvara, by a Gandharva* King Viṣvāvasu. She left that daughter as well and went back. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mēnaka II** – Granddaughter of Daksha Prajāpati*. Daughter of Swadha. She had sisters named Dhanya and Kaḷāvati. The three of them once went to Vaikunṭha to visit Lord Vishṇu. While they were there, Sanatkumāras (*great divine Sages, sons of Sanat*) also came there to visit Vishṇu. Dhanya violated protocol, not standing up when she saw them. The Sages gave her a Ṣāpa* that she would be born as a mortal (*human*) woman. When she begged them for mercy, they told her "You will marry Himavanta (*the Himālaya mountain. In the Purāṇas, mountains are anthropomorphed into men*). Pārvati (*Consort of Lord Ṣiva*) will be your daughter. You will attain Swarga through Her." *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

(*Alternate version*) Mind-born daughter of Pitṛ Dēvatas (*who protect descendants of their lineage*) named Vairāja. Himavanta (*the Himālaya mountain. In the Purāṇas, mountains are anthropomorphed into men*) married her. Once, Lord Vishṇu and the Dēvas came to their home and informed them that Sati, Consort of Lord Ṣiva will be born as their daughter. Mēnaka was constantly performing Tapas* directed towards Sati. Dēvi (*the Supreme Being, of whom Sati was an aspect*) appeared to Mēnaka and asked her to choose a boon. She requested that a hundred sons shall be born to her and that Dēvi be born as her daughter. Mēnaka had sons including Maināka and Krauncha, and daughters Aparṇa, Ēkaparṇa, and Ēkapāṭala. Aparṇa was none other than Pārvati.

Himavanta and the Dēvas decided to give Pārvati in marriage to Lord Ṣiva. Mēnaka, however, was unwilling to give her daughter to someone who lives in a cemetery and goes about naked. Himavanta persuaded her to agree to the marriage because it is in accordance with the wishes of the Dēvas.

After Pārvati and Ṣiva were married and had been living in the home of Pārvati's parents for some time, Mēnaka asked her daughter one day "Why does your husband live in the cemetery? How much longer will you stay in our house?" Pārvati was angered and told Her husband about Her mother's words. Pārvati and Ṣiva then left Her parents' house. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*

**Mēru** – A golden mountain (i*n the Purāṇas, mountains are anthropomorphed into men*). The mountain is like a belt around the earth. Sūrya (*the Sun God*) and Chandra (*the Moon God*) revolve around it. Mēru had daughters Ayati and Niyati. He gave them in marriage to Dhāta and Vidhāta respectively. *Brahma*

*Purāṇa*

**Mēru Dēvi** – Wife of Nābhi. Lord Vishṇu took birth as her son with the name Ṛshabha and became very famous. *Bhāgavata*

**Mīdhvānṣa** – Son of a king named Daksha (*different from the Prajāpati*). His son was Ṣarva. *Bhāgavata*

**Mithu** – An Asura*. Once, while a king named Ārshṭishēṇa was performing a Yāga, he carried away the king, his wife and the Ṛtvija*. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Mitra** – A king. His wife was Giribhadra. Their son was Chākshusha Manu*. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Mitrasakha** – (*Also known as Mitrasaha and Sudāsa*) A king of the Sūrya (*solar; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Chandra, or lunar*) dynasty. Son of Sudāsa and husband of Madayanti. Mitrasakha received a Ṣāpa* that he would become an Asura and eat human beings.

One day, Mitrasakha was on his way to the Āṣram of Sage Vasishṭha and lost his way in the forest. On his way, he saw a Brahmin (*Mitrasakha did not know at the time that the Brahmin was Vasishṭha's eldest son Ṣakti*) blocking his path and exclaimed "Hey! Why are you standing in my way? Move aside." When the man said "I am on the Dharma Patha (*righteous path*). Why are you asking me to move aside?" Mitrasakha angrily hit the man. The man gave Mitrasakha a Ṣāpa that he would become an Asura and eat human meat. Mitrasakha then recognised the man as Ṣakti, son of Vasishṭha and begged him for the means of release from the Ṣāpa. Meanwhile, Sage Viṣvāmitra, who happened to be nearby, made an Asura named Kinkara possess Mitrasakha. Whenever the

Asura possessed him, Mitrasakha abandoned his kingly duties and acted as an Asura.

One day, a starving Brahmin came to Mitrasakha and requested him to provide him a meal with meat. He agreed to provide the meal, went into the Antahpura*, forgot all about the meal for the Brahmin and went to sleep. Waking up during the night, he remembered that he had asked the Brahmin to wait, and calling his cook, told him to give the Brahmin a meal with meat. When the cook asked "How can I get meat at this time of night?", he told the cook to use human meat. The cook went to the place where criminals are executed, brought some human meat, cooked it and served it to the Brahmin. The Brahmin, recognizing the meat as human, gave the king a Ṣāpa that he would become a man-eater. Thinking "The source of this Ṣāpa was really Ṣakti", and saying "You suffer the result of your own Ṣāpa", he ate Ṣakti and all his brothers.

Mitrasakha, after he became an Asura due to the Ṣāpa, was killing humans. One night, he saw a Brahmin couple having sex and killed the man. The grief-stricken widow gave him a Ṣāpa that he would die when he has sex with his wife.

A disciple of Sage Gautama, Udanka, on his way on an errand for his Guru, saw Kalmāshapāda. On seeing Udanka, he said, "I am starving and you came at the right time, I will eat you" and was about to pounce on Udanka. Udanka said, "I am on a mission for my Guru but you can eat me after I finish it." He added that it was Mitrasakha's wife's earrings that his Guru's wife desired and requested help to obtain them. Mitrasakha agreed to help him and gave him an object his wife would recognise as being her

husband's and warned him that he would not be able to see the queen unless he was clean. Udanka went and showed the object to Madayanti and she gave him her earrings. As he was returning with the earrings, Udanka saw Mitrsakha and told him that he got the earrings, that he will deliver them to his Guru's wife and return for Mitrasakha to eat him. Mitrasakha was greatly impressed by Udanka's devotion to his Guru and to truth. He said, "Brahmins are very powerful. It was a Brahmin's Ṣāpa that caused this sad state of mine. Please release me from the Ṣāpa." Udanka then touched Mitrasakha who was then released from the Ṣāpa and became his normal self.

After he was released from that Ṣāpa, Mitrasakha resumed his role as king. Remembering the Ṣāpa by the Brahmin woman, he avoided sexual relations with his wife. But with a view to extending the dynasty, he directed Madayanti to beget a Kshētraja* son by Sage Vasishṭha. She had a son, Aṣmaka, in this manner. *Mahā Bhārata*

*An alternate version of the Ṣāpa given to him in another Purāṇa*:

One day, while on a hunt, he saw two tigers and hit one of them. The other tiger took the form of an Asura* and ran away. Some time after this happened, Mitrasakha was performing a Yāga. The Asura who had run away assumed the form of Sage Vasishṭha, came to the Yāga, asked that a meal with human meat be prepared for him and went away. Believing that it really was Vasishṭha that had made the request, he had a meal with human meat served to Vasishṭha when he actually arrived for the meal. The Asura who had run away joined Mitrasakha's kitchen as a cook and served

Vasishṭha the meal with human meat. Vasishṭha, enraged on being served human meat, gave Mitrasakha a Ṣāpa, saying "Since you served a meal with human meat to me, be an Asura and eat humans." Mitrasakha angrily responded "Why are you giving me a Ṣāpa after you came yourself and asked for a meal with human meat? Why are you punishing me when I did no wrong?" He, in turn, prepared to give Vasishṭha a counter-Ṣāpa that he would no longer be the Guru of kings of the Sūrya (*solar; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Chandra, or lunar*) dynasty and held water consecrated by the appropriate Mantra in his palm. Just then, Vasishṭha, using his Divya Dṛshṭi*, learnt of the Asura's mischief and agreed to lighten his Ṣāpa to a period of twelve years. Feeling that giving the Guru a counter-Ṣāpa in that situation was inappropriate, Mitrasakha poured on his own feet the water he was going to sprinkle on his Guru. He thereby came to be known as Kalmāshapāda (*one whose feet are polluted*). *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Mitrasēna** – Brother of Suṣarma (*ally of Duryōdhana*). King of the country of Trigarta. Arjuna killed him in the Mahā Bhārata war. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mitravinda** – Sister of Vinda and Anuvinda, rulers of the country of Avanti. Daughter of Lord Kṛshṇa's paternal aunt Rājādhi Dēvi. She chose Kṛshṇa as her husband at her Swayamvara*. *Bhāgavata*

**Mogali flower** – (*Mangrove or Screw Pine; the flower is very pleasantly fragrant*) Once, Brahma and Vishṇu were each claiming to be the greatest. Suddenly, a brilliant column resembling a phallus appeared before them. Seeing no end to it either above or below, Brahma and Vishṇu decided to check where its ends were.

Brahma assumed the form of a swan and flew up. Vishṇu took the form of a boar and descended towards the bottom. However far they went, they could not see the end of it. On the way, Brahma saw a Mangrove (*Mogali, in Telugu*) flower. Brahma asked the flower where it was coming from. It said "I have been crawling up this object for a very long time, hoping to see its beginning. I have not been able to reach it. Brahma said "I have been coming up for a very long time also to see its beginning, but have been unable to reach it. Tell Vishṇu that I have seen the end and came back." The flower agreed to Brahma's request. The Mogali flower testified that Brahma had seen the end. When Vishṇu and Brahma both returned to the starting point, Brahma lied and said He had seen the end. Believing Brahma, Vishṇu saluted His victory with a Namaskāra*. Ṣiva then manifested from the column. Brahma and Vishṇu greeted Him with a Namaskāra. Because Brahma and the Mogali flower had lied, Ṣiva gave the flower a Ṣāpa* that it was ineligible for use in worship. The flower begged His forgiveness. Ṣiva softened the Ṣāpa in that while not eligible for use in worship, it will be beautiful and be worn on (*women's*) heads. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Mōhini** – Once upon a time, as the Kshīrasāgara (*ocean of milk*) was churned by the Dēvas and Asuras*, Amṛtam* emerged. The Asuras took possession of the Amṛtam first. The Dēvas, concerned that they would not get any Amṛtam, went to Lord Vishṇu and pleaded with Him to help them have some. With a view to taking the pot of Amṛtam away from the Asuras, Vishṇu took the female form of Jaganmōhini (*enchantress of the world*). Each Asura was trying to take the pot of Amṛtam from another. Mōhini went to them and said "Do not fight. I will serve it to everyone." The

Asuras handed the pot over to Her. She made the Dēvas and Asuras sit in rows facing each other, to receive Amṛtam. The Asuras were transfixed by Her beauty. Mōhini started distributing the nectar, to the Dēva row first. Once it became clear that there will probably be none left for the Asuras, the Asura, Rāhu, snuck into the Dēva row and was imbibing Amṛtam. Sūrya (*the Sun God*) and Chandra (*the Moon God*) noticed that an Asura had surreptitiously joined the Dēvas and signaled to Vishṇu. Vishṇu, using His signature weapon, the Chakra* cut Rāhu's neck off. The other Asuras did not receive any Amṛtam. *Mahā Bhārata*

Lord Ṣiva, having heard of the episode, was curious as to what Vishṇu looked like as a female and requested Vishṇu to show Him. Vishṇu tried to dissuade Ṣiva by saying "Your mind will be disturbed and You will lose control of Your actions. You cannot withstand the effect of my female form." This only enhanced Ṣiva's desire to see for Himself and He kept pressuring Vishṇu. All of a sudden, Vishṇu disappeared. Wondering where He had gone suddenly, Ṣiva was searching for Vishṇu in all directions. He instead saw Jaganmōhini standing before Him. Ṣiva almost lost His mind. When He tried to catch Her, She ran from Him. Chasing Her, Ṣiva crossed rivers, mountains, and forests, unaware of how far He and Jaganmōhini had been running. Eventually, Ṣiva ejaculated spontaneously. His semen became Kāla Bhairava (see **Daksha**). By then, He learned the power of Vishṇu's Māya (*illusion*). On Ṣiva's request, Vishṇu assumed His own form again. *Bhāgavata*

**Mṛkanḍu** – Son of Vidhāta and his wife Niyati. Manasvini was his wife. He performed Tapas* and begot Mārkanḍēya, a son with exceptional good qualities. *Bhāgavata*

**Mṛtyu** – Once upon a time, Bhūdēvi (*Goddess Earth*) complained to Lord Brahma that the burden on her was becoming excessive and begged Him to reduce it. He could not think of any way to reduce the living beings and he became very angry. The worlds began to burn up from the heat of His anger. Lord Ṣiva noticed, came to Brahma and asked Him to calm down. Brahma controlled His emotions. A woman with a red body emerged from Brahma at the time. Brahma gave her the name Mṛtyu and ordered her to kill living beings on a continuing basis. Saddened at the prospect of being a killer, she cried and said "I cannot perform this task. I will perform Tapas* instead", and proceeded towards the Himālaya mountains. Brahma summoned her back and told her "I will give you a boon that you will not be guilty of violating Dharma (*righteous path*). The tears you shed will become diseases. Continue to perform that task." Mṛtyu then requested Him to make people suffer from Lōbha (*avarice*), Krōdha (*anger*), Īrshya (*envy*), Asūya (*jealosy*), and Mōha (*infatuation*). Brahma granted her request. Mṛtyu then agreed to kill living beings. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Muchikunda** – A king. Son of Māndhāta. When a war occurred between the Dēvas and Asuras*, he assisted the Dēvas. The Dēvas asked him to choose a boon. He was very tired and sleepy. So, with a view to sleeping for a long time, he asked that whoever disturbs his sleep shall be incinerated when he, Muchikunda, looks at him. He was sleeping near the mouth of a cave. Kālayavana, who came there on Kṛshṇa's trail, mistook him for Kṛshṇa and kicked him hard. When Muchikunda woke up and looked up, Kālayavana was reduced to ashes in accordance with the boon Muchikunda had received.

Muchikunda later saw Krishna, recognised Him and remembering what Garga had said about how Lord Vishṇu will reincarnate in the twentyeighth Mahā Yuga (*super epoch; consists of four Yugas; Kṛta, Trēta, Dwāpara, and Kali*), he sang the praises of Kṛshṇa. Pleased by this, Kṛshṇa said "You hunted and killed animals, following your Kshatriya nature. You will be cleansed of that sin by Tapas* and, in your next life, be born as a Brahmin who is friendly to all creatures, and reach me. Muchikunda, leaving the cave, realized that Kali Yuga (*when righteousness, or Dharma, limps along on one foot*) was about to start, went north and performed Tapas in Badarika Āṣram. *Vishṇu Purāṇa; Bhāgavata*

Once, he went to war against the city of Alaka (*the city of Kubēra, the God of Wealth*). On the way, Kubēra's soldiers attacked and defeated his army. He then prayed to his Purōhit (*priest*). The Purōhit, using up his combined spiritual power earned by Tapas*, Mantras, and Pūja (*worship of Gods*), made his army strong again. When he later again went to fight Kubēra, Kubēra stepped aside, saying he could not fight Muchikunda's forces which had the combined power of Brahmins and Kshatriyas (*princely or warrior caste*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mudāvati** – Daughter of King Vidūratha. One day, Mudāvati, while strolling in a garden, was abducted by an Asura* named Kujambha and held in Pātāḷa (*netherworld*). Earlier, when she went to the forest with her father, she happened to see the tunnel made by the Asura. At the time, she also learned that Kujambha's powerful weapon, a mace named Sunanda will become powerless if touched by a woman. Remembering this, she kept touching the

mace while thinking of Ṣēshu (*giant, multi-hooded Nāga**). Vidūratha sent his sons to rescue her. They were also captured and held by the Asura. A king named Vatsandhra went to Pātāḷa to rescue them. A battle ensued between him and the Asura. After a while, the Asura picked up his signature weapon, the mace, and was fighting the king with it. But because it had been touched by Mudāvati, it had become powerless. Vatsandhra then killed the Asura and rescued Vidūratha's sons and daughter. Vidūratha gave his daughter to Vatsandhra in marriage. Ṣēshu gave Mudāvati the name Sunanda because she had been touching the mace Sunanda while thinking of him. She and Vatsandhra had sons named Prāmṣu, Pravīra, Ṣūra, Suchakra, Vikrama, Krama, Bali, Balāka, Chanḍa, and Prachanḍa. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Mudgala I** – A Brahmin. He would gather rice one grain at a time and donate all the grains that he saved on a holy day. Once, Sage Durvāsa came to his house. Mudgala provided him a sumptuous meal. Subsequently, Durvāsa returned to his house three or four more times. Mudgala provided him with whatever he had. The Sage told him "I am pleased by your charitable nature. You are sure to attain Dēva Lōka (*heaven*)" and left. Soon thereafter, a Dēva Dūta (*divine messenger*) arrived on a flying machine to take him to Dēva Lōka. Before climbing aboard, Mudgala asked him "What is Dēva Lōka like?" He said "All imaginable luxuries and pleasures will be available for you there. You will stay there until you experience the full fruit of your good Karma. Then you will return to earth." Mudagala then told him "Sir, Take your machine and go back. I will try to attain that which gives permanent bliss of Mukti*." He then sat down performing Tapas*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mudgala II** – Son of Bharmyāṣva. Yamīnara, Bṛhadiṣa, Kāmpilya, and Sṛnjaya were his brothers. Divōdāsa was his son. Sage Gautama's wife Ahalya was his daughter. *Bhāgavata*

**Mūka** – An Asura*. An attendant of Lord Ṣiva. When Ṣiva disguised Himself as a hunter to test Arjuna, this Asura, on Ṣiva's direction, took the form of a wild boar and lunged at Arjuna. Arjuna shot an arrow at the boar. Arjuna and the fake hunter fought over the boar. Hit by arrows from both Arjuna and Ṣiva, the boar assumed his original form and disappeared. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mūlaka** – Son of Aṣmaka (see **Kalmāshapāda**). Terrified of Paraṣurāma, he once hid among women and acquired the name Nārī (*women*) Kavacha (*shield*). By re-establishing the Sūrya (*solar; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Chandra, or lunar*) dynasty after it was decimated by Paraṣurāma, he also acquired the title of Mūlaka (*progenitor*). His sons were Ilabila and Viṣvasaha. *Bhāgavata; Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Muni** – Daughter of Dharaṇi and Daksha Prajāpati*. One of the wives of Kaṣyapa. Her sons were Bhīmasēna and Ugrasēna. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Mura** – An Asura*. He performed Tapas* directed towards Lord Brahma and obtained a boon that whoever he touches with his palm will be incinerated. As soon as he obtained the boon, he went to Yama (*the God of Death*) to test it on him. Yama ran to Lord Vishṇu and told Him of his plight. Mura also went to Vishṇu and said "I came to fight you." Vishṇu asked him "If you came to fight, why is your heart palpitating so fast?" Saying "It is not!", the

Asura put his hand on his chest. As soon as his palm touched his chest, he was incinerated. Mura had a son, Antariksha, who was killed by Lord Kṛshṇa. *Bhagavata*

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**Nabha** – Son of Vishadha (*also known as Nala*) and father of Puṇḍarīka. *Raghu Vamṣa; Bhāgavata*

**Nabhaga** – Son of Vaivasvata Manu* and father of Nābhāga. *Bhāgavata*

**Nābhāga I** – Son of Nabhaga, who was the son of Manu. While he was still a bachelor, he asked his brothers to divide the family wealth and give him his share. The brothers told him that they will follow their father's direction on the matter. When he went to his father and asked him for direction, the father said "The Angirasas, who are very intelligent, will temporarily lose their ability to make proper decisions and become idiots on the sixth day of their performance of the Sattra Yāga. You will teach them two principles and become famous as a poet. The Angirasas will be so pleased with your help that they will give you the money remaining from the Yāga expenses." Everything happened as foretold by Nabhaga. However, as Nābhāga was about to receive the money, a black man snatched the money instead. When Nābhāga asked him why he was taking the money the Munis were giving him as a reward for his help, the black man answered that he should do what Nābhāga's father suggests. Nābhāga went back to his father and

asked his advice. His father said that the Munis gave the money left from the Yāga to Rudra first and therefore, the money belongs to the Deity. Nābhāga returned, saluted the black man with a Namaskāra* and said "The money is not mine. Please accept it." Lord Ṣiva (*who was in the guise of a black man*), pleased with the honesty and truthfulness of Nabhaga and Nābhāga, gave Nābhāga boons including invisibility and knowledge of the Supreme Being along with the money and disappeared. Nābhāga's son was Ambarīsha. *Bhāgavata*

**Nābhāga II** – Son of King Dhṛshṭa (*also known as Dishṭa*). He became a Vaiṣya (*merchant caste, third in the caste hierarchy, below Brahmin and Kshatriya [warrior/princely]*) as a result of his actions. He had a son named Halandhana. He once fell in love with a Vaiṣya maiden named Suprabha and requested her father to give her in marriage to him. The father protested that it was improper for Nābhāga, a Kshatriya, to marry a Vaiṣya girl but Nābhāga insisted. Then the Vaiṣya suggested that they should do whatever Nābhāga's father, who had authority (*as the king*) over both of them, advised. They went to the king and related their disagreement to him, however, Dhṛshṭa also prohibited his son's marriage to a Vaiṣya girl. Nābhāga abducted Suprabha and brought her to the palace. Her father complained to the king. Dhṛshṭa sent some soldiers to fight his son and later joined the battle against his son. After they had been battling for some time, a Muni named Parivrāja came there and said to the king "Inter-caste marriage is acceptable (*the rule was that a man can marry a woman of his own or any lower caste*) and since Nābhāga had married a Vaiṣya, he had become a Vaiṣya and it was therefore improper for the king,

a Kshatriya, to wage war on a Vaiṣya." Father and son stopped fighting. Nābhāga lived a merchant's life, in accordance with the king's direction. A son named Bhananda was born to Suprabha. Bhananda defeated his cousin Vasurāta (*son of Nābhāga's younger brother*) in war and took over the kingdom. He then asked his father to rule the kingdom. Nābhāga said that he was ineligible to rule the kingdom since he had become a Vaiṣya. Suprabha then revealed their past history, that neither her father nor she was a Vaiṣya, that they had become Vaiṣya due to a Ṣāpa*, and that Bhananda's victory in war has released them all from the Ṣāpa. Nābhāga, however, crowned his son as the king rather than accepting the throne. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Nabhasvanta** – Son of an Asura* named Mura. He was killed by Lord Kṛshṇa. *Bhāgavata*

**Nabhasvati** – Second wife of Vijitāṣva and mother of Havirdhāna. *Bhāgavata*

**Nābhāvara** – Son of Ṣruta and father of Sindhudwīpa. *Bhāgavata*

**Nābhi I** – Lord Vishṇu Himself was born to Mēru Dēvi and was named Urukrama and taught the way of reaching the Paramahamsa (*Supreme Being*) to scholars and Munis. *Bhāgavata*

**Nābhi II** – A king. Son of Āgnīdhra. He ruled the kingdom to the south of the Himālaya mountain (*Āgnīdhra divided the Indian subcontinent [Jambūdwīpa], all of which he had ruled, into nine kingdoms and gave one to each of his nine sons*). When Nābhi performed Tapas* for the purpose of begetting a son, Lord Vishṇu appeared to him and said that He Himself will be born as Nābhi's

son. Nābhi's wife was Sudēvi. Lord Vishṇu was born to her and was named Vṛshabha (*also known as Ṛshabha*). Indra*, envious of Vṛshabha's power, caused a drought in Nābhi's kingdom. Vṛshabha counteracted and with his power, made it rain. Bharata was Nābhi's grandson. *Bhāgavata; Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Nāchikēta I** – Son of Vājaṣravasa. Vājaṣravasa gave away his entire wealth. Then Nāchikēta asked him "Father! To whom will you donate me?" His father did not answer his question. Nāchikēta repeated the question at which his father became angry and said "I will give you to Yama (*the God of Death*)." Nāchikēta was wondering what he could do for Yama. He suddenly fell down and lost consciousness. He found himself in Yama's palace. Yama was not home at the time. Three days after Nāchikēta arrived, Yama returned home and saw Nāchikēta. Yama told him "You came to my home as a guest and were not properly greeted for three days. I will, therefore, grant you three boons of your choice." Nāchikēta requested that his father be made calm and favourably disposed towards him when he is sent back home; Yama would explain the nature of fire; and teach him about the nature of existence after death. He obtained some knowledge of these matters and returned home. *Kaṭhōpanishad*

**Nāchikēta II** – Son of a Muni named Auddālaki. Once, after bathing and performing morning ablutions at the river, Auddālaki forgot his blades of Darbha (*sacred grass*) and his Kamaṇḍala* and came home. Remembering what he had done, he asked his son Nāchikēta to go and fetch them. By the time Nāchikēta went to the river, it had risen and the Darbha and Kamaṇḍala had been washed away. Nāchikēta returned from the river and told his father he

could not find the items. Auddālaki, angry with his son, said to him, "Go and visit Yama (*the God of Death*)." Nāchikēta immediately fell down and became unconscious. Auddālaki, remorseful for his thoughtless words, cried in sorrow. Nāchikēta recovered the next morning, as if from sleep. (*Nāchikēta informed his father that Yama showed him Puṇya* Lōkas*) He told his father that Yama told him that the best parts of the Puṇya Lōkas are reserved for those who did Gōdāna (*donating cows to Brahmins*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nāḍījangha** – A (*articulate*) crane. He was also known by the name Rājadharma. Nāḍījangha was a close friend of Lord Brahma. Once, a Brahmin named Gautama, abandoning the Brahminic ways, became cruel and started eating meat and drinking alcohol. He married a woman of a tribe of hunters and associated with merchants to make money. One day, as Gautama was travelling through a forest, a wild elephant chased him. He ran and hid under a peepul tree. The tree was the home of Nāḍījangha. Nāḍījangha greeted the tired man with respect and gave him a meal and said "I do not have money. However, I have a friend in the city of Madhuvrajapura, an Asura* named Virūpāksha. If you go to him, he will give you some money." The Brahmin went to Virūpāksha. The Asura realized that the Brahmin was a bad person just by looking at him and did not want to help him but he gave him some money anyway because of his friend Nāḍījangha's promise to the Brahmin. Carrying the money he obtained from the Asura, the Brahmin, tired by carrying the heavy money, fell asleep. Nāḍījangha, flapping his wings to provide cool air to the sleeping Brahmin, fell asleep after a while. The crane was fat. The Brahmin

woke up the next morning and thinking the bird would make a good meal, killed him while he was asleep and ate him. Virūpāksha felt a sense of unease. The next day, noticing that Nāḍījangha did not visit him as he normally did daily, he sent messengers to visit the crane. The messengers reported back to him that his friend had been killed. He had the Brahmin brought to him and ordered his fellow Asuras to kill and eat him since he had committed a crime. They said they would not eat an ungrateful wretch. Even dogs rejected him as a meal. Virūpāksha had his friend's carcass put on a funeral pyre. Just then, Indra* arrived. Virūpāksha begged Indra to give his friend back to him. Indra told him that Lord Brahma probably took him because they were friends. A cow named Surabhi was nursing her calf nearby. Some foam from the calf's mouth fell on the funeral pyre. Nāḍījangha arose, alive, from the pyre. They understood that it was Lord Brahma who revived Nāḍījangha. Informed of the punishment planned for the Brahmin, Nāḍījangha begged Indra and the others to pardon him. The Brahmin was given some money and sent away. Nāḍījangha and his friend Virūpāksha lived happily. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Naḍvala** – Wife of Chākshusha Manu*. *Bhāgavata*

**Nāgadhanva** – A place of pilgrimage. The Dēvas crowned Vāsuki as the king of Nāgas* at this place. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nagnajit** – King of country named Kōsala. He had a daughter, Nāgnajiti (*literally, daughter of Nagnajit*). There were seven wild bulls in his city that were causing havoc with their sharp horns that none of his people could control or capture. The king announced that he would give his daughter in marriage to anyone who

succeeds in capturing the bulls. Lord Kṛshṇa killed them and married Nāgnajiti (*one of His eight wives*). *Bhāgavata*

**Nāgnajiti** – Daughter of Nagnajit, king of Kōsala. There were seven wild bulls in his city that were causing havoc with their sharp horns that none of his people could control or capture. The king announced that he would give his daughter in marriage to the man who tames them. Lord Kṛshṇa killed the wild bulls and married Nāgnajiti. She was one of Kṛshṇa's eight wives. *Bhāgavata*

**Nahusha I** – Son of Kadruva. A Nāga*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nahusha II** – Son of Āyu and his wife Svarbhānavi. He married Priyamvada. They had sons named Yati, Yayāti, Samyāti, Yāyāti, and Dhruva. Nahusha performed many Yāgas and thereby achieved divine status. When Indra* abdicated his position and ran away from fear of punishment for the sin of killing Viṣvarūpa, the Dēvas selected Nahusha to the position of Indra and gave him various attributes of theirs, considering him as suitable to be their ruler even though he was a mortal (*human*). Once he became Indra, he became extremely arrogant and started humiliating and insulting the Dēvas and Munis. Seeing Ṣachī Dēvi and desiring her, he ordered that she be brought to him. On the advice of Bṛhaspati (*the Guru of the Dēvas*), she hit upon the clever ruse of agreeing to sleep with him on condition that he arrive at her Palace riding a palanquin borne by Munis. Blinded by arrogance and lust, Nahusha ordered Sage Agastya and other Munis to carry his palanquin. He ridiculed the Mantras that Brahmins revere. When Sage Agastya protested and argued with him, he kicked Agastya's

head. Finally, Sage Agastya said to him "Since you are misbehaving due to excessive pride, I am giving you a Ṣāpa* that you shall become a serpent. You will be released from this Ṣāpa when someone gives the proper answers to the questions you shall ask anyone who encounters you." Nahusha immediately became a serpent and fell to earth, remaining articulate and retaining full knowledge of his past. He went about his quest for release from the Ṣāpa, binding (*a la a boa constrictor*) anyone he came across and asking them a set of questions. No one was able to give him the correct answers for a very long time. One day Bhīma (*the second oldest of the Pāṇḍavas*), walking in the forest, was caught by Nahusha. However hard he tried, Bhīma was unable to shake off the serpent. Dharmarāja came looking for his brother soon afterwards…The serpent told him he will release Bhīma if his questions were answered correctly. The serpent asked such questions as "What kind of person is called a Brahmin? Why is it said that even a liar can have a good afterlife if he did not kill any creatures?" Dharmarāja gave appropriate answers to all of Nahusha's questions. The serpent released Bhīma and released from Agastya's Ṣāpa, resumed his form as Nahusha and went back to heaven. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nahusha III** – A king. Once, when fishermen cast a net in the Ganga river, Sage Chyavana, who was performing Tapas* underwater in the river, was caught in the net. The fishermen, frightened when they saw him caught in their net, begged his forgiveness. Instead of getting angry, Chyavana said to them, "I have lived for twelve years with these fish, so it is only fair that I should die with them. Sell me along with the fish." The fishermen

reported the incident and what Chyavana said, to King Nahusha. The king came along with his council of ministers and requested Chyavana to forgive the mistake made by the fishermen. Chyavana asked the king to take his body and give fair value to the fishermen. The king told his staff to pay the fishermen a thousand coins. Chyavana said that is not fair value for his body. The king then directed that they be paid one crore (*ten million*) coins. Seeing that Chyavana was not in agreement, the king increased the bid to half his kingdom and then to his whole kingdom. Even then, Chyavana said it is not fair and asked him to think about it. As the king sat there wondering what to do, a Muni named Kavijāta came there and said, "A Brahmin and a cow have the same qualities, so only a cow is equal in value to a Brahmin." On hearing this, Nahusha went back to Chyavana and said, "O Great Sage! How could I know what is fair value for you? Anyway, I will give the fishermen one cow for you." Chyavana was pleased and told the king that a cow is like Agni and Amṛtam* and is worthy of the respect of even the Dēvas. The fishermen received the cow from the king, brought it to Chyavana and asked him to take the cow and bless them. Chyavana gave Nahusha many boons. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Naimiṣa Forest** – A forest near the Āṣram of Sage Gauramukha. Once, a king named Durjaya, accompanied by his army, tired from a hunt, was in the vicinity. Gauramukha offered them hospitality at his Āṣram. The Sage prayed to Lord Vishṇu who gave him a magic diamond which the Sage used to create a city in which he provided the king and his army all the amenities to which they were accustomed. The king asked the Muni for the diamond. The Muni

refused. The Muni then went to the Ganga river. The king sent an army to take the diamond. As soon as the army reached Gauramukha's Āṣram, the Muni's diamond created an army along with horses and chariots. That army was fighting King Durjaya's army when the Muni returned from the banks of the Ganga river. Seeing the raging battle, the Muni prayed to Lord Vishṇu who then destroyed Durjaya, and his army. Because all the Muni's enemies were killed in a Nimisha (*instant*), Lord Vishṇu decreed that the forest shall be called the Naimiṣa forest. *Varāha Purāṇa*

Some Brahmins once approached Lord Brahma, and requested His advice on a suitable location to perform Tapas*. Brahma said "I will make a chariot from Darbha (*sacred grass*) and throw it. Wherever it falls to earth is an auspicious place and you should perform Tapas there." He threw the chariot and the place where it fell was named the Naimiṣa forest. *Skānda Purāṇa*

Once upon a time, Brahma was roaming, looking for a place suitable to perform the Sattra Yāga, in preparation for creation of the worlds. A wheel from His chariot fell to earth. The place where it fell became the holy Naimiṣa forest. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

Long ago, some Munis were concerned that the Kali Yuga (*epoch in which Dharma, or Righteousness, is hobbling along on one foot out of the original four*) was approaching, and consulted Lord Brahma for advice on where to go. Brahma gave them a wheel and said "Keep rolling this wheel and follow it. Where it falls to the ground will be a holy place of pilgrimage. The place will come to be known as Naimiṣa." *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Nakshatraka** – A Brahmin. A disciple of Sage Viṣvāmitra. Viṣvāmitra sent him to trail king Hariṣchandra and collect the

money the king owed him. Secretly, Viṣvāmitra directed Nakshatraka to harass Hariṣchandra to the point it makes him tell a lie or break his promise. When Hariṣchandra gave up his kingdom to Viṣvāmitra and left for the forest with his wife and son, Nakshatraka tagged along. As part of his mission of harassment, he would complain that he was too tired to walk when they wanted to keep walking and would demand that they carry him and not their child. When they wanted to rest, he would demand that they keep going so that they could reach Kāṣi*, sell Queen Chandramati and repay his Guru's debt sooner. He would pretend to be thirsty and demand water when he knew there was no source of water anywhere nearby. Every once in a while, he would say "Just deny that you owe Viṣvāmitra any money (*which would be a lie, and Hariṣchandra will not lie*), and I will go away and leave you in peace." When the money Hariṣchandra received by selling Chandramati was not enough to repay the debt to Viṣvāmitra, Nakshtraka sold Hariṣchandra to the operator of a cremation ground. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Nakula** – Kshētraja* son of King Pānḍu (*one of the twin sons of his second wife Mādri by the twin Gods, the Aṣvins, after Pānḍu incurred a Ṣāpa* that he would die the moment he makes love to one of his wives. He had Kunti use the Mantra from her boon from Sage Durvāsa to summon three Gods who gave her three sons and also teach it to Mādri to enable her to become a mother*). Nakula was very handsome. After Mādri immolated herself on her husband's funeral pyre (*Pānḍu died from his Ṣāpa because he could not control himself and attempted to have sex with Mādri*), Nakula and his twin brother were raised by Kunti. Nakula regarded

his step-mother's sons as blood brothers, particularly never disobeying Dharmarāja. Nakula and his wife Rēṇumati (*also known as Karēṇuka; each of the Pānḍavas had at least one wife he did not share with his brothers, in addition to Draupadi, shared by all five*) had a son named Niramitra. His son by Draupadi was named Ṣatānīka.

It seems Duryōdhana did not feel the same degree of animosity towards Nakula and Sahadēva as he did towards the Kauntēyas (*sons of Kunti*). He did not take them seriously. Nakula and his twin brother accompanied the sons of Kunti everywhere, i.e., Vāraṇāsi, Drupada's city, the forest. During the incognito year, Nakula tended the animals (*especially the horses, as he was an expert in training and riding them*) in King Virāṭa's stables, using the pseudonym of Dāmagrandhi. He fought valiantly in the Mahā Bhārata war in which he killed Karṇa's sons Satyasēna, Chitrasēna and Suṣarma as well as many other Kaurava warriors. He conducted a triumphal campaign in support of Dhrmarāja's Aṣvamēdha Yāga* and brought much wealth as tribute. He was unduly vain because of his good looks. *Maha Bharata*

**Nakulam** – (*Sanskrit word for mongoose*) As Dharmarāja was about to complete the Aṣvamēdha Yāga* with devotion, concentration and charity, a mongoose appeared and in a human voice, said "What kind of Yāga is this? It does not compare in any way to the Yāga performed by Saktuprastha. When the water used to wash the feet of a guest at that Yāga fell on me, my head and one side of my body were turned to gold. In all the other Yāgas I have visited since, I could not have the rest of my body turned to gold!" When the Brahmins at the Yāga questioned it, the

mongoose related the story of Saktuprastha's Yāga (see **Jamadagni**). The mongoose was released from the Ṣāpa* and returned to his original form, Sage Jamadagni. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nala I** – Daughter of Vibhīshaṇa (*younger brother of Rāvaṇa who was banished as a traitor and aligned himself with Lord Rāma*). Nala was assigned the responsibility of guarding Sīta while She was a prisoner of Rāvaṇa in the Aṣōka Vana. She was sympathetic to Sīta (*unlike the other Asura* women guarding the prisoner*) and never abused Her. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Nala II** – A Vānara*. Son of Viṣvakarma*. He was a soldier in the army of Sugrīva (*the Vānara king who helped Lord Rāma during the search for Sīta and the subsequent Rāmāyaṇa war*). He was instrumental in the building of the Vāradhi (*bridge or causeway*) over the ocean, accompanied Rāma's army across the bridge and fought in the Rāmāyaṇa war. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Nala III** – Son of Nishadha, who was the grandson of Kuṣa (*one of Rāma's twin sons*). His son was Nibha. Nala crowned his son as the king of north Kōsala and retired to Tapovana*. *Raghu Vamṣa*

**Nala IV** – King of country named Nishadha. Son of Vīrasēna. Once, he caught a swan which was strolling in a garden. The swan (*in a human voice*) begged him to release it and promised to sing his praises to his beloved, Damayanti. Nala released the swan. The same swan was captured by Damayanti in her garden. The swan told Damayanti that of all the princes it had seen, only Nala was eligible to be her husband. Damayanti's father announced a Swayamvara* for Damayanti. Nala arrived for the Swayamvara. The Dikpālakas* had arrived earlier for the Swayamvara and they

asked Nala to do them a favour. He agreed. The favour they requested was for Nala to go to Damayanti and tell her that several Dēvas in love with her had come to her Swayamvara. They gave him the ability to become invisible so that he could enter Damayanti's Antahpura*. Even though disappointed that his love would be lost, Nala kept his promise to the Dikpālakas and went to plead their case. Damayanti declared that she will marry Nala and not any of the Dēvas, and if that becomes impossible, she would rather lay down her life than marry anyone else. Still in the mood to test her love, Dēvas, including Indra*, arrived for the Swayamvara, each of them disguised as Nala. Unable to identify her beloved out of all the look-alikes, she prayed to the Dēvas. They all dropped their disguises and took on their real appearance. Damayanti chose Nala (*signified by placing a garland of flowers around the neck of the chosen one*) and married him. Nala returned to his city with his wife.

Kali (*the personification of the current epoch when Dharma is limping along on only one leg – started with four in Kṛta, had three in Trēta and two in Dwāpara*), on his way to Damayanti's Swayamvara, encountered the Dēvas returning from the Swayamvara and learnt from them that Damayanti had chosen Nala. With jealousy toward Nala, Kali waited for a chance to punish him (*cannot punish anyone until that person violates a Dharma*). One day, after relieving himself, Nala forgot to clean his feet and performed Sandhya (*twice-daily ablution, at Sunrise and Sunset*). Utilizing this violation by Nala, Kali went to work and possessed him. He went to Nala's cousin Pushkara and advised him to play games of chance with Nala and win his kingdom. Kali

stayed with Pushkara, disguised as a Brahmin. Nala wagered and lost his kingdom to his cousin and left for the forest accompanied by his wife, Damayanti. In the forest, he threw the garment he was wearing at some birds, hoping to capture some fowl for dinner. The birds grabbed the garment and flew away with it. He then wrapped half of his wife's sari to cover his naked body. One night, while Damayanti was asleep, he left her and went away. He thought that if he was missing, his wife would go back to her father's home instead of suffering the deprivations and dangers of living in the forest with him. As he was wandering in the forest, a Nāga* named Karkōṭaka, who seemed to be caught in a fire, begged him to save his life. Right after Nala saved him from the fire, the serpent bit him and turned him into a deformed man. The serpent then said to Nala "You will return to your normal form whenever you wish to do so. You will assume the name Bāhuka and live with King Ṛtuparṇa as his cook. You shall teach him the art called Aṣvahṛdaya (*Sanskrit, meaning the 'heart of a horse'*) and learn from him the art of Akshahṛdaya (*among other things, this involves the ability to tell the number of leaves on a tree without counting them*)." Some Brahmins sent to search the forest for Nala heard Nala's cries and suspected that he might be who they were seeking to find. (*Aware that her husband may not be recognizable, Damayanti told the Brahmins to speak certain words to which only her husband would know the answer she had in mind*) The only person who responded with the right words was an ugly man who was a servant of King Ṛtuparṇa of Ayōdhya. Suspecting that the ugly man was Nala, but wanting to confirm his identity, Damayanti's father announced a second Swayamvara for her the

very next day (*probably to limit the attendance*) and sent another Brahmin to invite Ṛtuparṇa to the Swayamvara (*no other kings were invited, contrary to standard practice*). Ṛtuparṇa came in a chariot driven by Bāhuka (*the ugly man who was the only one who spoke the right response to Damayanti's coded message and the only driver who could drive a thousand miles in a day*) to witness the Swayamvara. As Bāhuka was cooking dinner for Ṛtuparṇa, Damayanti sent a maidservant to further test him. At the same time, she sent her children (*son named Indrasēna and daughter named Indrasēna*) along with the servant. Bāhuka picked up the children in his arms, showered them with kisses and cried. Confident that Bāhuka is in fact Nala, Damayanti, with her mother's permission, invited him to the palace. Within his hearing, she asked, "Is it proper for Nala to leave his wife in the forest and run away?" In reply, he asked, "Is it not shameful to announce a second Swayamvara like this?" Vāyu, the Wind God, proclaimed that Damayanti is a Pativrata*. Nala, by 'thinking of'* Karkōṭaka, regained his own form. Ṛtuparṇa, on learning that Bāhuka was none other than Nala, regretted having used him for menial tasks and profusely begged his forgiveness. Ṛtuparṇa then taught Nala the art of Akshahṛdaya and learnt the art of Aṣvahṛdaya from him.

As soon as Nala learnt Akshahṛdaya, Kali emerged from Nala's body. As Nala, realizing that his and Damayanti's recent travails were caused by Kali possessing him, was about to give Kali a Ṣāpa*, Kali begged him abjectly to spare him. Kali then proclaimed (*as a sort of boon to Nala*) that anyone who sings the praises of Nala would not suffer the ill-effects of Kali.

Nala, Damayanti and their children stayed in his father-in-law's

place for a month and returned to their city. Nala then gave his cousin Pushkara a choice: a fight with Nala or a game of chance with Damayanti as the wager. Pushkara would have to return the kingdom to Nala if he should lose either the battle or the gamble. Pushkara chose the game of chance, which Nala, armed with the art of Akshahṛdaya, won easily. Nala regained the kingdom but he spared Pushkara's life because, after all, they were cousins (*he might also have had in mind the fact that Pushkara's unfriendly act was really Kali's doing*). Nala lived happily with his wife and children. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nala V** – Son of Dhūmāṣva. Friend of King Sudēva. Once, Nala went to the forest with his friend the king and while there, fell in love with the wife of a Muni named Pramati. The Muni, enraged by his behaviour, asked King Sudēva to punish Nala. Sudēva lied, saying he cannot punish Nala because he is a merchant and not a king. The Muni then gave Nala a Ṣāpa* that he would turn into water. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Nalakūbara** – Son of Kubēra (*God of Wealth*). He and his brother Maṇigrīva were once cavorting naked with some Apsaras* in Kailāsa (*Lord Ṣiva's abode*). Sage Nārada happened to be passing by. The Apsaras quickly clothed themselves. Nalakūbara and his brother, however, remained naked. They ignored Nārada, with the arrogance typical of rich people. Nārada decided to cure the brothers of their excessive pride and teach them proper behaviour. He gave them a Ṣāpa* that they would become trees. They remorsefully begged Nārada for release from the Ṣāpa. Nārada granted that they will be released from the Ṣāpa when Lord Kṛshṇa's foot touches them. They were born as trees in front of

the home of Nanda (*in Gōkul where Kṛshṇa was raised and lived until he and Balarāma left for Mathura on Kamsa's invitation*).

Once, Yaṣōda (*Nanda's wife and Kṛshṇa's surrogate mother*) found the child Kṛshṇa misbehaving and tied him to a heavy drum with a rope. The irrepressible Kṛshṇa crawled, dragging the drum along. As he passed between the trees that were Nalakūbara and his brother, the trees fell and the brothers emerged, released from the Ṣāpa.

Nalakūbara was extremely handsome. He was said to have had romances with the Apsaras. There is no evidence that he had ever fought any Asuras*. Among the Apsaras, Rambha was extremely fond of him (*in some stories, she is supposed to be his wife. However, Apsaras are not supposed to have lasting or marital relationships*). *Bhāgavata*

**Nalini** – Wife of Ajamīḍha. She had a son named Nīla. *Bhāgavata*

**Namuchi** – (*An Asura**) Son of Sage Kaṣyapa and his wife Danu. Namuchi's wife was Prabha. Once, Namuchi went into hiding due to fear of Indra*. Indra tricked him into exposing himself by proclaiming that he will not hit Namuchi with something wet or something dry. Namuchi came out of hiding but was then killed by being hit with foam. *Mahā Bhārata*

During a war between Asuras and Dēvas, Indra hit Namuchi with his Vajrāyudha (*a thunderbolt, Indra's signature weapon, literally 'weapon of diamond'*). The weapon did not even scratch Namuchi's skin. As Indra was wondering why his thunderbolt was so impotent, Ākāṣavāṇi* informed Indra of a boon Namuchi had – that he is immune to harm from anything wet or anything dry. Indra then killed him by hitting him with foam. *Bhāgavata*

**Nanda I** – A cowherd in Gōkul (*where Lord Kṛshṇa grew up*). In his previous life he was a Vasu named Drōṇa. Nanda's wife was Yaṣōda. Yōgamāya (*form of Dēvi, the Supreme Being, in a state of Yōga*) was born as their daughter. Vasudēva switched her with his baby Kṛshṇa and brought the baby Yōgamāya back to his jail cell. Nanda assumed Kṛshṇa was his son. *Bhāgavata*

**Nanda II –** Wife of Hūru. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nanda III** – Daughter of a Nāga* king named Sālapōtaka. Once, while Sālapōtaka was strolling in his garden, he saw a woman named Bahuḷa and falling in love with her, brought her home with him. Nanda, surmising that Bahuḷa would be a rival to her mother, hid her. Nanda did not reveal where she hid Bahuḷa in spite of her father's insistent questioning. Angered by her stubbornness, he gave her a Ṣāpa* by which she became mute. An Asura named Balāka took Bahuḷa back to her husband. Suṣarma (*Bahuḷa's husband*), performed a Yāga to cleanse her virtue, and also performed a Yāga praying to Goddess Sarasvati and restored Nanda's power of speech. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Nanda IV** – Son of Vasudēva and Madira, one of his several wives. *Bhāgavata*

**Nandana** – Indra's* palace garden. *Bhāgavata*

**Nandi** – Son of a Muni named Ṣilāda (*also known as Ṣālankāyana*), born as Ayōnija (*without passing through a birth canal*). Nandi was found (*literally unearthed*) while Ṣilāda was tilling his farm. Dharma, a Manu*, who had taken the form of a bull, had been reborn as Nandi. Nandi prayed to Lord Ṣiva. When Ṣiva appeared to him and asked him to request a boon, he asked

that he should be constantly contemplating on Ṣiva. Ṣiva granted his wish and also decreed that he would be considered to be the son of Pārvati, His Consort. Because of this boon, Nandi became Ṣiva's transport and security chief.

Nandi was guarding the entrance to the residence of Ṣiva and Pārvati. Once, while they were making love, the Asura* and devotee of Ṣiva, Rāvaṇa, tried to enter the residence. Rāvaṇa commented that Nandi had the face of a Vānara*. An angered Nandi retaliated against the boorish comment by giving Rāvaṇa a Ṣāpa* that his dynasty will be destroyed by Vānaras. *Ṣiva Purāṇa;Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Nandini** – The sacred cow belonging to Sage Vasishṭha. She was the daughter of Surabhi (*daughter of Daksha*), and Sage Kaṣyapa. Anyone who drank her milk would live for ten thousand years, without getting old. The Vasus (see **Bhīshma**) once stole her from Vasishṭha's Āṣram.

On the advice of Vasishṭha, King Dilīpa (*an ancestor of Lord Rāma*) and his queen worshipped Nandini, wishing for a son. Dilīpa followed Nandini wherever she went, walking when she walked and stopping whenever she stopped. One day, returning after grazing in the Himālaya mountain region, she entered a cave, unseen by Dilīpa. Searching all over for her, Dilīpa came upon the scene of Nandini about to become a meal for a lion. He tried to pull an arrow from the quiver to kill the lion when his arms were paralyzed. The whole scenario was created by Nandini to test Dilīpa's devotion to her. Pleased that Dilīpa was prepared to sacrifice his life to save her, she gave him a boon that he shall have children. *Bhāgavata*

**Nandivardhana** – Son of Pradyōtana. His reign was followed by that of the last king of the dynasty, King Ṣiṣunāga. *Bhāgavata*

**Nara and Nārāyaṇa** – Sons of Dharma. After killing Hiraṇyakaṣipu, Vishṇu's Narasimha Avatāra split into two beings. The human part became Nara and the Simha (*lion*) part became Nārāyaṇa. They were born with aspects of Lord Vishṇu and were very close friends. Once, while they were performing Tapas* in a sacred forest named Badari, Indra* saw them and, as he had a habit of doing when he saw anyone performing intense Tapas, sent Apsaras* to disrupt their Tapas. Nara and Nārāyaṇa noticed that it suddenly was untimely spring. They also immediately saw the Apsaras. They realized it was Indra's typical trick. Nārāyaṇa, looking at the Apsaras, scratched his Ūru (*thigh*) with his nail. A beautiful woman emerged (*was born*) from his thigh. Since she was born from an Ūru, she came to be known as Ūrvaṣi. Seeing that she was more beautiful than themselves, the Apsaras were amazed and feeling ashamed, went back.

Nara and Nārāyaṇa were born for the purpose of killing Asuras*. There was an Asura named Sahasra Kavacha (*Sahasra means one thousand and Kavacha means a suit of armor – literally, one with a thousand suits of armor*) who was born covered by a thousand suits of armor. No one had the ability to stand and fight against him without performing Tapas for a thousand years. Nara and Nārāyaṇa therefore performed Tapas to prepare to fight against him. Nara would perform Tapas for a thousand years and attack Sahasra Kavacha as Nārāyaṇa would stop fighting the Asura and start performing Tapas. Nārāyaṇa, after a thousand years' Tapas would take over the fighting and send

Nara back to Tapas. In this manner they cut through nine hundred and ninety nine suits of armor. Left with only one Kavacha, the Asura was reborn as Karṇa. Nara and Nārāyaṇa were reborn as Arjuna and Kṛshṇa respectively, to kill him. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

Prahlāda (*one of the great devotees of Lord Vishṇu and the grandfather of the great Asura Emperor Bali who was exiled to the netherworld by Lord Vishṇu in His incarnation as Vāmana*) was once passing by the place where Nara and Nārāyaṇa were performing Tapas and noticed that there were weapons by their side. He said "Why do Munis have weapons by their side? These must be fake Munis." His words angered Nara and Nārāyaṇa. They had a fierce argument with Prahlāda, which eventually led to a fight. However hard he fought, Prahlāda was unable to defeat Nara and Nārāyaṇa. He then prayed to Lord Vishṇu, who appeared and explained to him that Nara and Nārāyaṇa were His aspects and were invincible to him. *Vāmana Purāṇa*

**Nārada I** – Lord Vishṇu Himself became a Dēvarshi (*divine Ṛshi*) and taught the world how to become free of the bonds of Karma. *Bhāgavata*

**Nārada II** – Born from Lord Brahma's neck. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Nārada III** – Son of Lord Brahma. He was born from Brahma's thigh. He never had children or a family. He could never stay in any place for long due to a Ṣāpa* by Daksha Prajāpati*. He tours the three worlds (*Swarga or heaven, Bhūmi or earth, and Pātāḷa or the netherworld*) constantly, singing the praises of Lord Vishṇu to the accompaniment of his Vīṇa named Mahati. He gathers the

news of the various lands he visits and helps those in need to the extent of his ability. When he comes across someone in trouble, he helps restore their peace of mind by explaining that everything is in the plan of the Supreme Being. When a king named Akampana was mourning the death of his son in war, Nārada consoled him by explaining the cycle of life and death. He helped Ṣṛnjaya recover from his sadness on the death of his son by narrating the tale of the sixteen kings. He also brought Ṣṛnjaya's son back to life. As Indra* was about to kill Līlāvati (*wife of the Asura* Hiraṇyakaṣipu*) while she was pregnant with Prahlāda, he happened on the scene and saved her life by revealing to Indra the fact that the child with whom she was pregnant will be a great devotee of Lord Vishṇu. Whenever Dharmarāja needed it, Nārada came and enhanced his knowledge of Dharma. When Lord Rāma and Lakshmaṇa were caught in the grip of the Nāgāstra (*literally, serpent weapon*) of Indrajit (*son of Rāvaṇa*), he gave them the idea of invoking Garutmanta*. These are a few examples of Nārada's many deeds helping others.

Nārada did not have the ability to keep to himself anything he heard, but had to reveal it to someone. He was the one who revealed to Sage Vālmīki that Lord Vishṇu would incarnate Himself as Rāma. He took pleasure in causing enmities by revealing to one person what another person said. He was so notorious for causing fights between people that he came to be known as Kalahabhōjana (*he whose meal is a fight*). However, no one disrespected him on account of his propensity for causing fights. The end results of his interventions were always beneficial to the world. One such episode concerned the Asura named

Jalandhara. The Dēvas told Nārada how they were unable to defeat him. He assured them that he would find a way and went straight to the Asura. Nārada praised him to the sky. He said "You have a jewel of a horse, a jewel of an elephant, and a jewel of a mansion. But the lack of a jewel-like wife is a shortcoming." Jalandhara asked him how he could overcome that shortcoming. Nārada said "Why does Ṣiva, living in a cemetery, need a beautiful wife like Pārvati? You should take Her." Jalandhara coveted Pārvati. As a result, Jalandhara had to battle Lord Ṣiva and was killed by Him (*it should be noted that Ṣiva, among all the Dēvas, was the least likely to fight Asuras unless He was attacked*).

Once, he provoked Garutmanta against Nāgas* by saying to him "What do the serpents have that compares to your prowess? How can you stand by while your mother is their servant?" Another time, when Utathya's wife (*Utathya was the brother of Bṛhaspati, the Guru of the Dēvas*) was abducted by Varuṇa (*the God of Rain*), he went and told Utathya "Varuṇa carried your wife away. Go and retrieve her."

On another occasion, a foreign (*or barbarian*) king named Kālayavana was excessively proud of his strength. At about that time, Lord Kṛshṇa had defeated Jarāsandha. Nārada went to Kālayavana and said "Kṛshṇa is inflated with pride right now because he had just defeated Jarāsandha. Is it that you do not know Jarāsandha or are you keeping quiet for fear of Kṛshṇa?" So saying he encouraged Kālayavana to attack Mathura. As a result of this provocation, Kālayavana went to war and was killed by Muchikunda.

In an earlier life, Nārada was the son of a maidservant in the

residence of Vēdic scholars. From early childhood, he had been following several Munis as they went about their religious rituals and performing errands for them. In this manner, he acquired some knowledge of the nature of Brahma*. His mother, while milking a cow, died of a snake bite. Nārada actually felt relieved to be freed from family ties. He then headed north and reaching a forest, sat down, meditating on Īṣwara (*refers to God in general, but most often used as another name of Lord Ṣiva*). Lord Ṣiva was standing right in front of him but Nārada could not see Him. He then tried to form a mental picture of Īṣwara but was not successful in that endeavor either. He did hear Lord Ṣiva saying "You cannot see my form, which great Sages can see. The world will be destroyed in the Praḷaya (*great deluge*). You will then leave this body, be reborn and will be able to see my physical form." Nārada eventually left his physical body and by the grace of Lord Vishṇu, attained a pure spiritual form and was reborn as Brahma's mind-born son along with great Sages such as Marīchi. *Bhāgavata*

Once, he went to Rāvaṇa who greeted him with respect and inquired about what is happening (*Nārada was well-known for his constant travels and news-gathering*). Nārada said "You have defeated many humans. How does that enhance your prestige? The Dēvas are very arrogant right now, especially Yama (*the God of Death*). You should defeat them." He then went to Yama, and asked him "Did you notice how arrogant Rāvaṇa has become? He is planning to go to war against you. Teach him a lesson."

An Asura named Mahisha had been harassing everybody. The Dēvas were incapable of defeating him. Nārada went to the Malaya mountain where Dēvi (*the Supreme Being*) resided in the form of

Nārāyaṇi. Nārada said to Her "Did you hear about the arrogance of Mahisha? He says he is going to marry you. You shoud kill him." He then went to Mahisha and said to him "O! King of the Asuras! What is the value of your youth and sexual prowess if you do not marry Nārāyaṇi, who resides on Malaya mountain? You must somehow marry Her." Mahisha sent a message to Nārāyaṇi asking Her to marry him. This annoyed Dēvi sufficiently that She fought and killed Mahisha.

In one of his incarnations, Nārada was a Brahmin named Sārasvata. Handing over family responsibilities to his son, he went to the forest to perform Tapas*. When a pleased Lord Vishṇu appeared and asked him to choose a boon, he requested that he be allowed Sāyujya (*to always be identified with Him*). Vishṇu granted that he will attain Sāyujya by being born as Brahma's son and that he will be known as Nārada because he gives water to everyone (*Nāra means water in Sanskrit; da, means one who gives the noun to which it is attached*).

Once Nārada went to Ṣvētadwīpa (*literally 'white island'. Lord Vishṇu is said to have performed Tapas there*) where he saw many identical, handsome men and could not identify which of them was Vishṇu. He prayed to Vishṇu, who then appeared before him and asked him to request a boon. Nārada asked Vishṇu to teach him about His Māya (*illusion, particularly associated with Lord Vishṇu*). Vishṇu agreed to do so and asked Nārada to take a dip in a nearby lake. Nārada was transformed into a beautiful young woman as soon as he went under the water. The young woman that used to be Nārada was named Chārumati, daughter of the king of Kāṣi* and married a king named Ṣibi. She had sons named

Nagnajitti, Viprajitti, Vichitti, Chāruvaktra, and Chitta. These sons and their father mounted many victorious campaigns against rulers of neighbouring lands and took over their countries. Finally, the king of Kāṣi killed father and sons in a war. Chārumati, devastated by grief of losing her husband and all her sons, prepared a funeral pyre for them and was about to immolate herself along with the corpses. All of a sudden, she was transformed back into Nārada. Puzzling over what had happened to him and wondering whether the whole episode was a dream, he finally concluded that it was Lord Vishṇu's Māya. *Varāha Purāṇa*

One day Nārada went to Indra's Sabha (*court*) while Rambha and other Apsaras* were performing dances. After a while, Indra looked at Nārada and asked him "Whose singing do you like the best?" Nārada said "The woman who is most confident in her ability to express herself is the best. All the Apsaras started arguing, each saying she is the greatest. Indra then declared that only Nārada can judge who is best. Nārada then said "Whoever can rouse Sage Durvāsa is the greatest." An Apsara named Vapu said she can rouse the Sage and went to earth to find him. *Mārkaṇḍēya Purāṇa*

Once, a Brahmin named Kauṣika was singing in heaven in the presence of Goddess Lakshmi, Her maids, several Munis, Nārada, and Tumburu among others. Lakshmi's maids shooed away everyone but Lakshmi, using canes. Lakshmi gave Tumburu a gift and invited him alone to stay and sing along with Kauṣika. Nārada, feeling insulted and enraged, gave Lakshmi a Ṣāpa that she would be born to an Asura and would be punished the same way she insulted him.

Lord Vishṇu consoled him and explained that Tumburu attained his special status by always singing devotional songs and advised Nārada "If you too want such high status, you should go to the mountain named Mānasōttara and learn music from an owl (*articulate*) named Gānabandhu (*literally, relative of music*) which lives there." Nārada did what Lord Vishṇu advised but found on his return that he still was not the equal of Tumburu. Inflamed by jealousy, he went back to Vishṇu and complained. Vishṇu promised that during His incarnation as Kṛshṇa, He Himself will teach him music.

Nārada approached Him during the Kṛshṇa incarnation and reminded Him of His promise. Kṛshṇa asked him to learn music from Jāmbavati and His other wives for a year. Nārada did not attain proficiency in music even after learning from each of Kṛshṇa's wives for one year. Finally, he was trained by Kṛshṇa, became a great musician and discarding his jealousy, was happy. *Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa*

Once, the sons of Daksha Prajāpati were preparing to create progeny, in accordance with the direction of their father. Nārada went to them and asked them "Why do you want to create progeny instead of thinking of what you need to do to attain Mukti*?" and persuaded them to stop their plans for creation. Learning that it was Nārada who diverted his sons from creation, Daksha complained to Lord Brahma. Brahma gave Nārada a Ṣāpa that he would be reborn to one of Daksha's daughters. Daksha also gave Nārada a Ṣāpa, that he would be unable to stay in one place for any length of time and that he would never beget children. Daksha gave one of his daughters, Priya, to Brahma in marriage. Nārada

was reborn as her son. Brahma asked the reborn Nārada to propagate the human race. Nārada refused, saying "I cannot abide family ties. Why would I want bonds of love and lust?" This angered Brahma who gave him a Ṣāpa that he would be a womanizer and promiscuous man. He softened the blow of the Ṣāpa by granting that he would become a devotee of Vishṇu due to his proximity to Brahmins. Angered by his father giving him a Ṣāpa, Narada countered with a Ṣāpa that Brahma shall not be eligible to be worshipped. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

Once, as Nārada arrived in Vaikunṭha (*Lord Vishṇu's abode*), Lakshmi, who was sitting beside Vishṇu, suddenly got up and went inside. Nārada asked Vishṇu why she left on seeing him, an old Muni. Vishṇu replied that it was proper for a lady to avoid being seen by any man other than her husband and that Māya was a powerful force. Nārada asked Vishṇu to give him a demonstration of His Māya. Vishṇu took Nārada along on Garutmanta, descended to the ground at a place called Kanyākubja and asked Nārada to bathe in a nearby lake.

Nārada was transformed into a beautiful young woman as soon as he went under the water (*an important characteristic of Māya in this and the previous account of Nārada becoming a beautiful woman, which seem to be the same event chronicled slightly differently by two different authors at different times, was that when turned into a woman, Nārada had no memory of his life as a man*). Lord Vishṇu immediately left. A king named Tāḷadhwaja happened to see her and falling in love with the lovely maiden, took her to his palace. He made her his queen.

She and the king had many sons. After many years, an enemy

king attacked Kanyākubja and killed all her sons in battle. She was mourning the loss of all her sons when Lord Vishṇu arrived disguised as an old Brahmin. He explained to her that her sons, like any other humans, are mortal. He led her to the same lake she had emerged from and asked her to bathe in it. As soon as she immersed herself in the lake, she turned back to the original form, Nārada. Vishṇu also took His own form. Nārada understood that the whole episode was a demonstration of Vishṇu's Māya. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

Once, while Nārada was performing Tapas in the Himālaya mountains, Indra sent (*as was his habit*) some Apsaras to disrupt the Tapas. But due to the fact that Nārada worshipped Ṣiva, he was immune from such distractions. The knowledge that he was not distracted by beautiful Apsaras (*but without knowledge of the reason*) made Nārada inordinately proud. He assumed he had resisted the arrows of Manmatha (*the original love God*) by his own willpower. After finishing the Tapas, Nārada visited Ṣiva and proceeded to visit Vishṇu and Brahma. Even though Vishṇu was pointing out Ṣiva's possible role, Nārada went on bragging that he conquered sexual desire by himself. As he was leaving from his visit, Vishṇu created a city on Nārada's route and put in it a lovely woman named Ṣrīmati. Nārada saw her and learning that a Swayamvara* would be held for her, he went back to Vishṇu and asked to borrow His good looks so she would choose him. *Linga Purāṇa*

Once Nārada and Parvata (*his nephew*), touring the world, stopped in the city of King Ambarīsha who received them with great respect and invited them to stay in his palace. There they saw

a beautiful young woman and asked the king who she was. He told them that she is his daughter, Ṣrīmati. They both asked him for her hand in marriage. He said "How can I give her to both of you? I will give her to whichever one of you she chooses." A date for Ṣrīmati's Swayamvara was announced. Prior to the date, Nārada and Parvata, each without the knowledge of the other, approached Lord Vishṇu. Each of them requested Vishṇu to make the other's face that of a monkey. Vishṇu did what each of them requested. Each unaware of his own appearance, both went to the Swayamvara. Everyone at the Swayamvara, seeing two men with monkey faces, laughed at them. Ṣrīmati chose Vishṇu, because of his divine good looks. Lord Vishṇu took her home. Nārada and Parvata were very angry. They blamed Ambarīsha for breaking his promise to give his daughter to one of them and gave him a Ṣāpa that his nature would become Tāmasa (*dark, the least desirable among the three, Sattva, Rajas and Tāmasa*). At that instant, Vishṇu's Chakra (*weapon that looks like a circular saw*) started chasing them. They ran to Swarga Lōka (*heaven, Indra's and Dēvas' abode*). They saw Ṣrīmati in Vishnu's abode. They said "You stole the girl we loved after you changed our faces to monkey faces." They gave Him a Ṣāpa that he would become a human, suffer forced separation from His wife and will need the help of monkeys to regain her. Vishṇu revealed to Nārada that he was able to resist lust for the Apsaras only due to Lord Ṣiva's power and vanished. The Ṣāpa by Nārada and Parvata caused Him separation from His wife during His incarnation as Rāma as well as rescuing her with the help of monkeys. Ṣ*iva Purāṇa*

Once, Nārada and his nephew Parvata, while roaming over the

three worlds promised that they will always reveal to the other whatever is in their hearts without keeping any secrets, and agreed that whoever keeps a secret from the other will be subject to a Ṣāpa. They went to the palace of King Ṣṛnjaya. The king designated his daughter Sukumāri to look after them and attend to their needs. Nārada fell in love with her but was too ashamed to tell his nephew about it. Discovering Nārada's amorous intent after some time, Parvata told Nārada "Since you violated our agreement by keeping your love for her a secret from me, I am giving you a Ṣāpa that you will have a monkey-face after you marry her." Angered by this (*even though he did break a promise and the penalty agreed-to was a Ṣāpa*), Nārada countered with his own Ṣāpa, namely that Parvata will lose his access to Swarga. Nārada married Sukumāri with her father's blessing (*she consented to marry Nārada even after learning that he will have a monkey face*). Some time passed before Nārada and his nephew met again. Each of them released the other from his Ṣāpa. Nārada found his face had regained its human shape when he returned home. Sukumāri did not recognise him at first but then Parvata assured her that the person she was looking at was, in fact, her husband Nārada.

Nārada and Parvata, after enjoying Ṣṛnjaya's hospitality for a while, prepared to leave. They offered him a boon of his choice to reward him. He said their kind regard is the only boon he wanted. Nārada gave him a boon that he would have a son who will be greater than the Dēvas. Parvata immediately predicted that the son will be short-lived. The king became sad at the news. Taking pity on him, Nārada said "Indra will kill your son. 'Think of me'*

when that happens. I will bring him back to life." A son was born to Ṣṛnjaya. Because the child's urine and stool were gold, he was named Suvarṇashṭhīvi. Some thieves, thinking the boy's body must be made of gold, killed the boy and cut the body up. Ṣṛnjaya 'thought of' Nārada. Nārada told the king of the thieves' evil deed and revived the boy. Indra was jealous of the boy's special nature and on the advice of Bṛhaspati (*Guru of the Dēvas*), he turned his Vajrāyudha (*a thunderbolt, Indra's signature weapon, literally 'weapon of diamond'*) into a tiger which saw the boy strolling in a garden and killed him. Nārada revived the boy again. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Naraka I** – An Asura* born to Lord Vishṇu (*while he was in the Varāha, a wild boar, incarnation*) and Bhūdēvi (*Goddess Earth*). As Vishṇu woke up from a state of Yōga (*Yōga Nidra, the sleep state in which Vishṇu waits between Yugas or epochs. During these intervals, the whole world is under water, He alone sleeps on his serpent bed on the ocean*), Bhūdēvi was sexually aroused with desire for Him. Vishṇu asked her to choose a boon. She requested Him to give her son the weapon known as Vaishṇava Astra. Lord Vishṇu granted her wish. Naraka ruled from the city of Prāgjyōtisha as his capital. His transport was an elephant named Supratīka. Naraka's son was Bhagadatta. The commander of his army was a man named Pīṭha. Naraka was arrogant due to his might and was harassing humans and the Dēvas alike. He abducted and held as prisoners sixteen thousand women. He had stolen the earrings and umbrella of Aditi (*mother of the Dēvas*). Lord Kṛshṇa accompanied by Satyabhāma fought and killed him. *Bhāgavata*

**Naraka II** – Son of Viprajitti. *Vishṇu Purāṇa; Ṣiva Purāṇa;*

*Varāha Purāṇa*

**Narāntaka** – Son of the Asura* Rāvaṇa. He was killed in the Rāmāyaṇa war by Angada (*son of Vāli*). *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Nārāyaṇa I** – One of the many names of Lord Vishṇu. He got the name from sleeping on Nāra (*Sanskrit for 'water'*). *Bhāgavata*

**Nārāyaṇa II** – Son of Ajāmiḷa. *Bhāgavata*

**Nārāyaṇa Saras** – A holy place of pilgrimage where the Sindhu (*present-day Indus*) river joins the ocean. Daksha's sons including Haryaṣvas and Ṣabaḷāṣvas performed Tapas here. *Bhāgavata*

**Nārāyaṇāstra** – A Divine weapon. It is infallible and kills anyone who opposes it. It spares only those (*on whom it is deployed*) who disarm themselves and salute it with a Namaskāra*. Aṣvatthāma had used it during the Mahā Bhārata war against the Pānḍavas. Lord Kṛshṇa directed Arjuna to drop his weapons but Bhīma, ignorant of the power of the weapon, was about to oppose it. Kṛshṇa and Arjuna took him away from the field of battle (*retreat is equivalent to disarming*). *Maha Bharata*

**Nārī Kavacha** – A king (see **Mūlaka**). *Bhāgavata*

**Narishyanta I** – Son of Vaivasvata Manu*. *Bhagavata*

**Narishyanta II** – Eldest son of Marut. He followed his father's and ancestors' way by performing many Yāgas and giving away much wealth to the needy. Intending to perform one more Yāga, he sought a Brahmin to be the priest. Every Brahmin he requested told him the same thing, namely that he himself was about to perform a Yāga and was unavailable to help Narishyanta. Also, after his massive charitable giving, there were no poor Brahmins left in his

kingdom to accept any more charity. Narishyanta married Indrasēna, daughter of Babhru. He had a son named Dama. He crowned Dama as his successor and left for Tapōvana* accompanied by his wife. An enemy of Dama named Vapushmanta beheaded him while he was living the life of a Muni. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Nārī Tīrthas** – Holy places of pilgrimage, along the coast of the southern ocean (*most likely the Bay of Bengal*). There are five of them, named Saubhadra, Paulōma, Kārandha, Prasanna, and Bhāradwāja. Apsaras* named Saurabhēyi, Vanda, Samīchi, Budbuda, and Lata were living in these in the form of alligators, due to a Ṣāpa*. People were generally afraid to bathe in these bodies of water due to the known presence of these predators. But Arjuna (*ever fearless*) once waded into one of these dangerous lakes. When an alligator grabbed him. Arjuna pulled it out of the water and threw it on shore. Released from the Ṣāpa, the alligator assumed the original form of an Apsara. Arjuna then released the other four Apsaras from their alligator forms by pulling them out of the water. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Narmada I** – A river (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*). She was born from the body of Lord Ṣiva. Once, she saw Duryōdhana, a king of the Manu dynasty, took the form of a human woman and made love to him. They had a daughter named Sudarṣana as a result. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Narmada II** – A river (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*). Daughter of Chandra (*the Moon*

*God*). She and Purukutsa were in love with each other. Nāgas* went to Lord Vishṇu and complained that Gandharvas* were coming to Nāga Lōka and were killing the Nāgas. Vishṇu advised them to seek the help of Purukutsa, who had His aspects. As they were debating among themselves about how to reach Purukutsa, Narmada came to them in her human female form. They begged for her help. She took Purukutsa to Nāga Lōka. He drove the Gandharvas out of Nāga Lōka. Narmada became Purukutsa's wife. A son named Trasadasyu was born to them. Grateful to Narmada for saving their lives, the Nāgas guaranteed safety from serpents to anyone who invoked her name. *Hari Vamṣa*

**Narmada III** – A Gandharva* woman. She had three daughters, Sundari, Kētumati, and Vasuda. She gave them in marriage to Sumāli, Mālyavanta, and Māli respectively. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Nidāgha** – Son of Pulastya. Once, as a king passed by riding an elephant, a Sage named Ṛbhu asked "Who is a king? Who is an elephant?" Nidāgha, who was within earshot of the Sage, pushed the Sage's upper body down and climbing on his back, said "The one at the bottom, like you, is the elephant and the one on top, like me, is the king." The Sage taught those around him, including Nidāgha, that he was illustrating the principle of Advaita which is that there is no difference between "you" and "me". Nidāgha learnt a great lesson and falling at the Sage's feet, became his disciple. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Nigamaṣarma** – Son of a Brahmin in the city of Pīṭhika. He deviated from the discipline of Brahmin life and was accustomed to consorting with prostitutes. His sister let him stay in her house,

trying to reform him. She provided meals for him, along with their parents. After a while, he stole her jewelry and ran away. Some thieves robbed him of the jewelry he stole, beat him to a pulp and dumped him in the forest. A man of the Ṣūdra* caste felt sympathy for him, took him home and looked after him. The man's wife also attended to his needs. After staying with the couple for some time, Nigamaṣarma eloped with the man's wife. After leading a life full of sin, he was finally disgusted with himself and giving up eating, starved to death near a holy place of pilgrimage named Narasimha Tīrtha* (*Narasimha, meaning half man, half lion, was Lord Vishṇu's fifth incarnation*). Because he died at such a holy place, he attained a place in heaven. *Padma Purāṇa*

**Nikṛti** – Sister of Gāndhāri. Dhṛtarāshṭra married her as well. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nikumbha I** – Leader of a group of Lord Ṣiva's attendants. Once, Ṣiva told him that He intends to move to the City of Kāṣi* and directed Nikumbha to somehow expel the then-current ruler of the city, Divōdās. Nikumbha appeared in a dream of a Brahmin named Aunikumbha and directed him to see to it that a temple to Lord Ṣiva is built in the city of Kāṣi. The Brahmin related details of his dream to King Divōdās. Divōdās built the temple, installed the icon of Ṣiva and was worshipping Ṣiva daily. After a while, angry and disappointed that his wishes for boons had not been satisfied, he had the temple dismantled. Nikumbha was enraged by this act of destruction of his Lord's temple and using that as a pretext, he gave the city a Ṣāpa* that it would become an uninhabited place. Afterwards, he brought Ṣiva and Parvati there. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*

**Nikumbha II** – Father of Sunda and Upasunda. A descendant of the Asura* Hiraṇyakaṣipu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nikumbha III** – Son of the Asura* Kumbhakarṇa (*younger brother of Rāvaṇa*). Long before the start of the Rāmāyaṇa war, he recommended to his uncle that he should go to war against Rāma. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Nikumbha IV** – Son of Haryaṣva. His son was Barhiṇāṣva. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Nīla I** – A commander in the army of King Durjaya. He accompanied the king on a hunt after which they visited the Āṣram of Sage Gauramukha. The king sent his minister to take from the Muni the Maṇi (*diamond*) which had enabled the Muni to build a fabulous city. When the Muni refused to part with it, Durjaya sent an army under the command of Nīla to take the diamond. As soon as Nīla descended from his chariot at Gauramukha's Āṣram, the Muni's diamond created an army along with horses and chariots. That army was fighting King Durjaya's army when the Muni returned from the banks of the Ganga river. Seeing the raging battle, the Muni prayed to Lord Vishṇu who then destroyed Durjaya, Nīla and their army. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Nīla II**– Son of Kadruva. A Nāga*. *Maha Bharata*

**Nīla III** – A Vānara*, a soldier in the army of Sugrīva. He fought in the war between Lord Rāma and the Asura* Rāvaṇa. He killed Rāvaṇa's minister Prahasta in the war. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Nīla IV** – Son of Ajamīḍha and his wife Naḷini. His son was Ṣānti. *Bhāgavata*

**Nīla V** – A king who fought on the Pānḍava side in the Mahā Bhārata war. Aṣvatthāma killed him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nīla VI** – King of the city of Māhishmati. He fought on the Kaurava side in the Mahā Bhārata war. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nīla VII** – Daughter of a cowherd named Kumbhaka in the City of Mithila. One day, Sage Nārada came to Kumbhaka's house and started to extol the beautiful appearance of Lord Kṛshṇa. Nīla happened to come to see her father at that instant and fell in love with the person being described by Nārada. Kumbhaka introduced Nīla to Nārada as his daughter and mentioned that he was looking for a husband for her. Sons of Asura* Kālanēmi were reborn as bulls in Kumbhaka's stable. No one could control the bulls which were harassing people and destroying crops. The king of Mithila ordered Kumbhaka to keep them under control. Unable to comply with the king's command, Kumbhaka announced that he would give his daughter in marriage to the man that could tame the bulls. Lord Kṛshṇa killed the bulls and married Nīla. (*Appears to be an alternate version of the story of Nāgnajiti, one of the eight wives of Kṛshṇa, from Bhāgavata. There is no mention of Nīla in the Bhāgavata, which is the definitive Purāṇa of Lord Vishṇu's various incarnations. Nīla Sucharita is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Nīla Sucharita*

**Nīladhwaja** – King of the city of Māhishmati. He and his first wife Jwāla had a daughter named Swāha. Swāha chose Agni (*God of Fire*) as her husband at her Swayamvara*. Nīladhwaja captured Dharmarāja's sacrificial horse during the Aṣvamēdha Yāga*. Arjuna, who was guarding the horse as it traversed the land,

prepared to battle Nīladhwaja in order to recapture the horse. Agni, afraid that his father-in-law would be defeated, burned Arjuna's army and killed them all. Arjuna prayed to Agni. Agni restored Arjuna's soldiers to life and prevented war by negotiating a peace agreement between Arjuna and Nīladhwaja, which required Nīladhwaja to surrender the Yāga horse to Arjuna. At that point, Nīladhwaja's second wife criticized her husband, saying "Who would surrender a Yāga horse after capturing it? Is that what a proud Kshatriya would do?" Nīladhwaja rejected the truce arranged by his son-in-law and battled Arjuna. He was defeated and had to surrender the horse. His second wife rebuked him for his cowardice and went back to her parents' place. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Nimi I** – A king and emperor of the Sūrya (*solar; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Chandra, or lunar*) dynasty. Son of Ikshvāku. Once, he collected together all the materials needed for a Yāga and requested Sage Vasishṭha to officiate as the priest. As it happened, King Puruhūta had earlier invited Sage Vasishṭha to officiate at his Yāga. Vasishṭha, therefore, told Nimi that he will come and perform his Yāga after he completes King Puruhūta's Yāga. Saying to himself "Life is transitory. Why waste time?", Nimi decided not to wait and with Sage Gautama as the priest, was performing the Yāga. Vasishṭha then arrived after completing the other Yāga, and seeing that the Yāga was being performed without him, became angry and gave Nimi a Ṣāpa* that he would become a disembodied entity. (*Alternate version: Vasishṭha arrived while Nimi was asleep. Being asleep, Nimi failed to greet the Sage with a Namaskāra*. Vasishṭha became angry at*

*not being properly greeted and gave Nimi a Ṣāpa*) Nimi expired. Sage Gautama completed the Yāga, keeping Nimi's body in a bath of oil. The Dēvas, arriving to receive their share of Havya*, offered to give Nimi his body back. Nimi (*his soul*) did not wish to be reinstated in the body, saying "The body is the source of desire and ego, and experiences pleasure and sorrow." By the grace of the Dēvas, even though Nimi no longer had a body, he appeared to people as if he did. The land he ruled came to be known as Vidēha (*Sanskrit for "without a body"*). Nimi's right shoulder was churned and a son was born from it. He was named Janaka (*adoptive father of Sīta, Consort of Lord Rāma*). *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa; Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Nimi II** – Son of Sage Dattātrēya. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nimna** – Son of Anamitra. He had sons named Satrājit (*father of Satyabhāma*) and Prasēna. *Bhāgavata*

**Nīpa I** – A Rājarshi (*royal Sage*). He taught archery to Bhananda. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Nīpa II** – Son of Pāru. He had one hundred sons. In addition, he and his wife Sundari, daughter of Sage Ṣuka, had a son named Brahmadatta. *Bhāgavata*

**Niramitra I** – Son of Nakula (*one of the twins born to Mādri, King Pānḍu's second wife, by the Aṣvins, the twin Gods who are the physicians of the Dēvas*) and his wife Karēṇuvati (*each of the Pānḍavas had at least one wife he did not share with his brothers, in addition to Draupadi, shared by all five*) *Mahā Bhārata*

**Niramitra II** – Son of the king of Trigarta. He was killed in the

Mahā Bhārata war by Sahadēva (*one of the twins born to Mādri, King Pānḍu's second wife, by the Aṣvins, the twin Gods who are the physicians of the Dēvas*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nirdōsha** – Disciple of Vēdadarṣa. He was well-versed in the Atharva Vēda. *Bhāgavata*

**Nirruti** – One of the Ashṭa Dikpālakas*. He is in charge of the Southwest. His wife was Dīrgha Dēvi. In a former life, Nirruti was a hunter named Pingāksha. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Niṣākara** – A Muni. Sampāti and Jaṭāyu (*two giant, articulate birds*) lived in his Āṣram. Once, when the Muni went to the world of the Dēvas (*Swarga or Indra Lōka*), these two flew up, competing to be the one able to reach closest to the Sun.

He predicted that Daṣaratha's son Rāma would come to the forest, that Vānaras* would help Him search for His Consort Sīta, and that Sampāti's wings would grow back (*after they were cut off by Rāvaṇa*). Sampāti informed Angada and the others of these predictions. Sampāti's wings did grow back. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Nishadha I** – King of the city of Māhishmati. Agni (*the Fire God*), disguised as a Brahmin, was roaming in the city of Māhishmati, romantically inclined towards other men's wives. The king's men arrested him and took him to Nishadha. As the king was about to impose punishment on him, Agni flared up. The king, in fear, saluted Agni with a Namaskāra*. Agni told the king he would give him any boon he wants. Nishadha asked that any enemy king entering his kingdom shall be attacked by Agni (*fire*). Agni granted him the boon and asked that in return, the king should declare that women who commit adultery in his kingdom are not criminals.

*Maha Bharata*

**Nishadha II** – Grandson of Kuṣa (*one of the twin sons of Lord Rāma*). His father was Atithi and his son was Nala. Nala's son was Nabha. *Raghu Vamṣa*

**Nishādas** – Wild and cruel people who live in the hills. When the right thigh of Vēnu was being churned, a dark-skinned, short person with red eyes emerged. The Sages who were present shouted in alarm "Nishidha! (*stop*)". The descendants of this person were known as Nishādas. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nishṭhānaka** – Son of Kadruva. A Nāga*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Niṣumbha** – An Asura*. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Nitanta** – A royal Sage. He had sons named Sālvēya, Ṣūrasēna, Ṣrutasēna, Bindusāra, and Atisāra. All five of them married the same woman, Ajita. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nīti** – Son of King Ananga. He married Sunīdha, daughter of Mṛtyu (*Goddess of Death*). His son was Vēnu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nīti Ṣāstra** – In the Kṛta Yuga (*the first of four in one Kalpa; followed by Trēta, Dwāpara, and Kali.*), everyone lived in harmony with their Dharma (*code of conduct*). No king, whose main responsibility would have been to ensure adherence of the people to Dharma, was needed and there were no rulers in that epoch. Eventually, vices such as anger and lust spread among the people. The performance of Yāgas became rare. People generally became self-centreed. Indra* and the Dēvas were alarmed (*the Dēvas derive their strength and sustenance from the Yāgas performed on earth*) and related the conditions on earth to Lord

Brahma. Brahma composed a Nīti Ṣāstra (*moral code of conduct*) comprising one hundred thousand chapters and proclaimed that it would cleanse the world. Virūpāksha (*one of the eleven Rudras*), reborn as Viṣālāksha, realized that the human life-span is insufficient for anyone to read the book, let alone implement the principles in it. He condensed it into ten thousand chapters. Indra, learning it from Lord Ṣiva, further reduced it to five thousand chapters. Sage Ṣukra (*Guru of the Asuras**) reduced it to one thousand chapters. Lord Vishṇu created a mind-born son named Viraja to enforce the principles of the much-condensed Nīti Ṣāstra on earth. Viraja refused to descend to earth. Viraja's son Kardama chose to dwell in the forest rather than become a ruler. Anga, son of Kardama accepted the responsibility first assigned to his grandfather and ruled the earth in accordance with the Nīti Ṣāstra. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Nivāta Kavachas** – (*Sanskrit for 'wearing safe body armor'*) Asuras*. They were harassing the Dēvas. Whenever the Dēvas tried to fight them, they would hide in the ocean. They were invulnerable to the Dēvas.

They drove the Dēvas out of the beautiful golden city built by Indra* and occupied it. When Arjuna went to the heavenly abode of Indra (*his biological father*) after gaining the Pāṣupata Astra (*from Lord Ṣiva, one of whose names is Paṣupati*), the Dēvas gave him their divine weapons. Indra asked him to kill the Asuras in return. Indra gave him his chariot and the chariot driver. Arjuna killed the Nivāta Kavachas. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Niyati** – Daughter of Mēru, and wife of Vidhāta. Their son was Mṛkanḍa. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Niyutāyu** – Son of Ṣrutāyu. Once, when Arjuna defeated his father in battle, he fought Arjuna. He was also defeated. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Nṛga I** – Son of Vaivasvata Manu*. One of his descendants was Sumati. *Bhāgavata*

**Nṛga II** – A king. One day, tired after a long hunt, he slept under a tree. Some tribal men tried to kill him in order to steal the money he had with him. A woman emerged from his body and killed the thieves. The king, on waking up, was surprised to see corpses around him. He went to the nearby Āṣram of Sage Rāmadēva and asked him who the woman was that emerged from his body. The Sage told hm that she was the Puṇya he acquired by performing a Vrata* on the Dwādaṣi (*twelfth day after the new moon*) in the month of Ṣrāvaṇa. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Nṛga III** – A king. He acquired much Puṇya* by donating cows (*cows and bulls were the most important contributors to the ancient Indian economy. They were therefore considered sacred since Vēdic times. The charitable act of the greatest value for one's afterlife was to donate cows to deserving Brahmins*). One cow that he had donated joined the rest of the cows in his herd and returned to his house. Unaware of that fact, he donated the same cow to a different Brahmin. The first Brahmin who had received the cow went looking for his missing cow and found her in the second Brahmin's yard. He asked the first Brahmin to return the cow, accusing him of stealing his cow. The second Brahmin said "I received this cow from King Nṛga. It is mine, I will not give her to you." Unable to resolve their dispute about ownership of the cow,

they went to Nṛga. They were unable to meet with Nṛga even though they waited an inordinate amount of time. They were angry at this failure of the king to see his subjects, which they ascribed to his being blinded by pride and told him that he would live in a hole in the ground where he would not be visible to anyone. In other words, they gave him a Ṣāpa* that he would become a lizard. The first Brahmin asked him how he could take back a cow he (*the king*) had donated to him (*the first Brahmin*) and donate her to another Brahmin. The king pleaded with them that he was unaware that the cow had come back into his herd and offered to rectify his innocent error by donating a thousand cows to them. They refused his offer. Each of them wanted the same cow.

Nṛga was sent to hell for the sin of taking back a cow he had donated to one Brahmin and then donating her to another Brahmin. He fell back to earth in the shape of a lizard. One day this lizard was sitting near a well, shaking his head. Some passersby, thinking the lizard was polluting their drinking water, threw stones at him. The lizard just sat, taking the blows instead of running away. Some cowherds, seeing the lizard fall into the well, tried to extricate him. Surprised to see the lizard sitting still, they reported the strange incident to Lord Kṛshṇa. Kṛshṇa came and looked at the lizard. The lizard reverted to his original human form as soon as Kṛshṇa saw him and explained that he, King Nṛga, had turned into a lizard because of his act of sin. *Mahā Bhārata; Bhāgavata*

**Nṛsimhamūrti** – (*Lord Vishṇu's fourth incarnation with a human body and a lion's head*) An Asura* named Hiraṇyakaṣipu performed severe Tapas* directed towards Lord Brahma and obtained a boon that he cannot be killed by men or beasts; not

during the day or night; neither on the ground nor in the air; and neither inside nor outside. Inferring that the boon made him immortal, he was harassing the Dēvas as well as all three worlds. He was even harassing his own son because the son was a devotee of Lord Vishṇu. When his son told him that Vishṇu was omnipresent, he asked if He was in a pillar in his palace and kicked it. Lord Vishṇu emerged from the pillar in a form that was half man and half lion, and holding Hiraṇyakaṣipu on his thigh in a doorway at sunset, killed him with His claw, thus not violating any of the provisions of Lord Brahma's boon. *Bhāgavata*

The purpose of the Nṛsimha incarnation was achieved. Nṛsimha was roaming the earth, bloated with pride at His achievement. Lord Ṣiva, assuming the form of an elephant, killed Him, and removing His skin, covered Himself with it. The human part of Nṛsimha then became Nara and the animal part became Nārāyaṇa. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Nyagrōdha** – One of the brothers of Kamsa (*the evil uncle of Lord Kṛshṇa*). After Balarāma and Kṛshṇa killed Chāṇūra and Mushṭika, he attacked them and was killed by Balarāma. *Bhāgavata*

**Ōgharatha** – Son of Ōghavanta. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ōghavanta I** – Son of Pratīta, of the lineage of Nṛga, son of Vaivasvata Manu*. Sudarṣana married his daughter Ōghavati. *Bhāgavata*

**Ōghavanta II** – Son of Sudarṣana. Ōgharatha was his son. Ōghavati was his daughter. Unable to find a suitable match for her after searching everywhere, he gave her in marriage to his father Sudarṣana. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ōghavati** – Daughter of Ōghavanta. Unable to find a suitable match for her after searching everywhere, Ōghavanta gave her in marriage to her grandfather Sudarṣana. Sudarṣana, determined to defeat death while remaining a Gṛhasta (*family man; the point is that the spiritual power necessary for such an achievement is normally possible only to those who renounce family life and as Sanyāsis, perform sincere Tapas**) worshipped (*by serving their needs*) Atithis (*house guests*). He taught his wife Ōghavati that providing hospitality to Atithis was of primary importance, and that even if an Atithi wanted to make love to her, she should satisfy the guest's desire. Dharma Dēva (*the God of*

*Righteousness; a name of Yama, the God of Death*), to test Sudarṣana, came to his house as an Atithi when Sudarṣana was away from home. Ōghavati served him with everything a guest would want. But the Atithi was not satisfied. He told her he wanted to sleep with her. She was in a quandary. Committing adultery was a sin, but if she rejected the Atithi, she would be violating her husband's instructions to her. She took the Atithi to a secret place. Right then, Sudarṣana came home and called out to his wife. The Atithi told her to keep quiet and not answer, she remained silent. Sudarṣana sneaked a peek at them. The Atithi said your wife is giving me hospitality. Sudarṣana replied that he is very happy that his wife was following his instructions. The Dharma Dēva then assumed his true form and congratulated Sudarṣana and told him he succeeded in defeating death. *Mahā Bhārata*

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**Padma I** – Daughter of King Anaraṇya. One day, wandering in the forest, she went to the Āṣram of Pippalāda. He saw her and falling in love with her, asked "Whose daughter are you?" She told him. Pippalāda went to the king and asked him to give Padma to him in marriage. Padma's mother said her daughter cannot be given to this old man. But afraid to anger Pippalāda, her father performed his daughter's marriage with him. Padma went with Pippalāda to his Āṣram. One day, Dharma (*another name for Yama, the God of Death*) came to Padma disguised as a prince and said "O! Beautiful woman! With your beauty, this old man is your husband? Leave him. I will make you my queen." Padma, being a Pativrata*, lectured him on his wrong ways. Impressed by her virtue, Dharma showed his true form and gave her boons. Ṣ*iva Purāṇa*

**Padma II** – A Nāga* king. He lived on the shores of a lake named Mahāpadma. He would, on occasion, go to pull Sūrya's (*the Sun God*) chariot. His wife was Suvrata. A Brahmin named Bhṛgu (*different from the famous Sage*) came to his house once, seeking to learn from him the nature of the soul. Padma was not home at the time. Bhṛgu waited for him at the Naimiṣa forest. When he returned home, Padma asked his wife if guests or visitors were

receiving respect and hospitality. She told him that a Brahmin had been waiting for him. Padma went to Bhṛgu and paid his respects. Bhṛgu asked him to describe anything special that he happened to see. Padma said "Sūrya causes rain and also makes water evaporate. He gives food to people, he also makes them shrivel up. All power is in him. Is it not amazing? There is one thing more wonderful than that. I saw a bright light in the sky. The light merged with Sūrya, who told me that the light was the soul of a Brahmin who lived on grains that spilled over from rice mills, happy with whatever he could get. Bhṛgu, on hearing this, said to Padma "You have described the nature of the soul. That is all I wanted", and left. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Padmakalpa** – An epoch (*each cycle of Yugas, called a Kalpa, consists of Kṛta, Trēta, Dwāpara and Kali*) in Sṛshṭi (*creation*). The epoch is characterized by the emergence of Brahma on a Padma (*lotus*) from Vishnu's belly-button. Other Kalpas or epochs are Brahmakalpa and Varāhakalpa. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Padmakōmala** – Daughter of Twashṭa Prajāpati*. Wife of Ṣūrapadmāsura. *Skānda Purāṇa*

**Padmāksha** – Son of Chandrahāsa. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Padmāvati I** – Mother of Ambarīsha, of the Ikshvāku dynasty. She prayed to Lord Vishṇu, wishing for a son who will be His devotee. That son was Ambarīsha. *Linga Purāṇa*

**Padmāvati II** – Daughter of Ākāṣarāja. Ākāṣarāja had no children for a long time. When he was ploughing a field in preparation for a Putra Kāmēshṭi Yāga*, he uncovered this girl. He took her home and raised her. One day, while she was strolling in a garden, Lord

Vishṇu (*who took human form with the name of Ṣrīnivāsa*), who lived on Vēnkatādri (*Adri is another Sanskrit word for mountain*) came there on horseback, fell in love with her and sprinkled flowers on her. Padmāvati pelted Him with stones, had her female companions beat Him and went home. But she also started to feel for Him and was taken ill. A woman named Vakuḷamālika, who was taking care of Him, visited her. Later, Ṣrīnivāsa (*known as Vēnkaṭeṣwara, for the mountain*) Himself visited her in the form of a female soothsayer and told her family that Padmāvati was in love with Ṣrīnivāsa and that was why she was unwell. Ākāṣarāja gave his daughter in marriage to Vēnkaṭeṣwara. (*Vēnkaṭeṣwara Māhātmyam is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Vēnkaṭeṣwara Māhātmyam*

**Padmāvati III** – Daughter of King Bṛhadṛta of Simhaḷa (*another name for Ceylon, currently named Ṣrī Lanka*). She worshipped Lord Ṣiva with great devotion from her childhood. Ṣiva appeared to her and told her "Vishṇu Himself will become your husband and any other king who comes forward to marry you will be turned into a woman." and left. She did not reveal this information to anyone. When she reached marriageable age, her father announced a Swayamvara* for her. Princes from many countries attended. As soon as they saw Padmāvati, they became women. They were all upset by this obviously divine magic. No king or prince would contemplate seeking her hand in marriage anymore. Worried that she would remain a spinster, she was losing weight. One day, as she sat in a garden feeling sorry for herself, a parrot, speaking in a human voice, said "Lady! Why are you crying? A handsome man who will marry you does exist. He is said to be Lord Vishṇu Himself. I will bring Him to you. Stop worrying." The parrot then

went to her master, Kalki, in the city of Ṣambaḷa and told Him that only Padmāvati is eligible to become His wife and persuaded Him to fall in love with her. The parrot took Him to Simhaḷa and announced His arrival to Padmāvati. Padmāvati came to the garden, saw Kalki, had a conversation with Him and introduced Him to her father. Bṛhadṛta gave Padmāvati in marriage to Kalki. Realizing that Kalki must have divine powers, the kings who turned into women as soon as they saw Padmāvati did Namaskāra* to Kalki and requested Him to give them their manhood back. He told them to bathe in the Rēwā river and come back. They got their maleness back on bathing in the river and bade farewell to Kalki and Padmāvati and returned to their homes. *Kalki (Bhavishya) Purāṇa*

**Pailūsha** – Son of Kavasha. He worshipped Lord Ṣiva for the purpose of overcoming poverty. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Painga** – He learned the Samhita* of the Ṛg Vēda from a scholar named Jātukarṇi. *Bhāgavata*

**Pāka I** – Brother of the Asura* Jambha. Indra* killed him in a war between the Dēvas and Asuras. *Bhāgavata*

**Pāka II** – Younger brother of the Asura* Vṛtra. Indra* killed him and acquired the name Pākaṣāsana as a result. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pāka III** – One of the three female Asuras* designated by Kubēra (*the God of Wealth*) to tend to the needs of his guest Viṣravasu. A son Khara, and a daughter Ṣūrpaṇakha were born to her and Viṣravasu. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Palita** – A (*articulate*) mouse. A conversation that occurred

between him and a (*articulate*) cat named Rōmaṣa is described in the Mahā Bhārata. Bhīshma narrated it thus to Dharmarāja who asked him how a king named Nīrasa (*Sanskrit for 'weak'*) could save himself from his powerful enemies:

The mouse lived in a hole in the ground at the bottom of a tree. One day, the cat (Rōmaṣa) was caught in a net placed by a hunter. When the mouse (Palita) came out of his hole looking for food, a mongoose and an owl saw him. Realizing that escaping these two predators while searching for food was beyond his ability, he gathered his courage and quickly came up with a plan. He addressed Rōmaṣa, saying "I could cut through the net in which you got caught, but I am afraid of the mongoose and the owl." The cat replied "Come near me quickly. The mongoose and the owl, as afraid of me as you are of them, will not dare attack you when you are near me." Seeing the mouse close to the cat, the mongoose and the owl ran away. Since the mouse still did not start to cut away the net, the cat said "Why are you not doing anything? Ingratitude is not appropriate." The mouse replied "I am not ungrateful. I am wondering what you will do to me if I released you now. I am going to release you as the hunter approaches. In that situation, you will scamper up the tree to escape from the hunter, instead of eating me." He did as he stated. After releasing the cat from the net, he quickly went back to his hole. The cat, standing outside the hole, said "I want to felicitate you for saving my life. Please come out." Palita replied "You were caught in the net all night without any food. I cannot even imagine what thoughts will occur to you or what your family may do. For my safety, I will stay away from you." *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pallava** – Grandson of Jahnu. Son of Ajahnu and father of Kuṣika. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Palvala** – An Asura*. Son of Ilvala. Like most Asuras, he too was desecrating Yāgas being performed. When Balarāma (*Lord Kṛshṇa's older brother*) visited the Naimiṣa forest, several Munis pleaded with him to kill the Asura. Balarāma killed Palvala. *Bhāgavata*

**Panchachūḍa** – A Dēva female. Sage Nārada once asked her to explain the nature of the female sex. She told him that one of the faults of the female is the desire to commit adultery. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Panchajana I** – A Prajāpati*. His daughter was Asikni. Lord Vishṇu gave her to Daksha Prajāpati in marriage. *Bhāgavata*

**Panchajana II** – Son of Samhlāda (*son of Hiraṇyakaṣipu*). *Bhāgavata*

**Panchajana III** – An Asura*. He abducted and took away the son of Sāndīpa (*Guru of Lord Kṛshṇa and His brother Balarāma*). Sāndīpa asked his disciples Kṛshṇa and Balarāma to find and bring his son back. Searching for the Guru's son, they went to the seashore. Afraid of them, Samudra (*the Ocean G*od) told them that Panchajana had killed the boy and was hiding in the ocean. Kṛshṇa and Balarāma entered the ocean and killed Panchajana hiding there. Kṛshṇa took the conch (*each great warrior had a conch with a distinct sound, which they used to announce their arrival on the battlefield*) that was in his stomach. That is why Kṛshṇa's conch is called Pānchajanya. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Panchajani –** Daughter of Viṣvarūpa. Wife of Vṛshabha's son Bharata. Sumati, Rāshṭrabhuk, Sudarṣana, Ācharaṇa, and Dhūmakētu were her brothers. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pānchajanya** – A conch (*each great warrior had a conch with a distinct sound, which they used to announce their arrival on the battlefield*) that was part of the body of an Asura* named Panchajana. Once upon a time, the son of Sage Sāndīpa (*Guru of Lord Kṛshṇa and His brother Balarāma*) went swimming in a Tīrtha*, Prabhāsa, and was carried away by a big wave and drowned. An Asura who lived in the ocean, Panchajana, swallowed him. Sāndīpa asked his disciples Kṛshṇa and Balarāma to find and bring his son back. Searchimg for the Guru's son, they went to the seashore. Afraid of them, Samudra (*the Ocean God*) told them that Panchajana had killed the boy and was hiding in the ocean. Kṛshṇa and Balarāma entered the ocean and killed Panchajana hiding there. Kṛshṇa took the conch that was in his stomach. That is why Kṛshṇa's conch is called Pānchajanya. Kṛshṇa took the conch, went to the city of Yama (*the God of Death*) and blew the conch. Yama, startled by the sound of the conch, came, saw Kṛshṇa and realizing why Kṛshṇa had come, gave him the son of Sāndīpa. *Bhāgavata*

**Panchanada** – (*Sanskrit for 'five Rivers'*) Dhūtapāpa, Kiraṇa, Dharma, Ganga, and Yamuna together are called Panchanada. (*Kāṣi Khanḍa is a 'Sthala Purana'**.) *Kāṣi Khanḍa*

**Panchāpsara I** – A Muni named Ṣātakarṇi was performing intense Tapas* while eating nothing but the tips of Darbha grass (*used in many religious observances*) and taking baths in this lake.

Indra*, worried about the effects of the Tapas on his position, sent Pancha (*five*) Apsaras* to disrupt his Tapas. The Muni enjoyed life with the Apsaras in this lake. The lake came to be known as Panchāpsara lake. *Raghu Vamṣa*

**Panchāpsara II** – A lake in the Danḍaka forest. A Muni named Māndakarṇi entered and spent a long time with several Apsaras* enjoying this lake. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Panchaṣikha I** – Born from Lord Brahma's belly-button. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Panchaṣikha II** – A Sage. As an infant, he was breast-fed by a woman named Kapila and came to be known as Kāpilēya. Panchaṣikha went to Janaka's city of Mithila and silenced the hundred Gurus of King Janaka with the power of his arguments. Janaka then requested Panchaṣikha to teach him philosophy and he did so. Based on his teaching, Janaka said "Nothing of mine burned" when the city of Mithila burned down. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Panchavaṭi** – A forest on the banks of the Gōdāvari river. It was a haven for Asuras* who harassed everyone. Sage Agastya recommended that Rāma and Lakshmaṇa stay here during their exile. They built a cottage there and lived in it. It was from here that Rāvaṇa abducted Sīta. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Panchēndras** – Once, while Vaivasvata Manu* was performing a ritual sacrifice named Sattra Yāga in the Naimiṣa forest (*a holy place, a haven for many great Sages*) without hurting any living thing, human beings stopped dying, disturbing the normal cycle of nature. Indra* and other Dēvas then went to Lord Brahma and complained that that blurred any distinction between humans and

Dēvas. Brahma reassured them that Yama (*God of Death*) will resume performing his duty and that five who will be born from the semen of Dēvas woud be of assistance to Yama. On their way back, they saw a young woman crying in the Ganga river. Astonished to see that her tears were being transformed into golden lotus flowers, Indra asked her who she was. Saying "You have to come with me if you want to find out who I am", she took Indra to where Lord Ṣiva was engaged in gambling with His Consort. At the time Lord Ṣiva was disguised as Varuṇa (*the God of Rain, one of Indra's subordinates*). Believing Him to be in fact Varuṇa, Indra angrily said to him, "How dare you sit on a throne in front of me and gamble?" Enraged, Lord Ṣiva said to the young woman, "He is speaking rudely and arrogantly, bring him to me". As soon as she touched him, Indra fell to the earth. Lord Ṣiva ordered him, "Observe the details of this mountain and see what is here." Indra saw four others, exactly like himself. The Panchēndra (*Sanskrit for 'five Indras'*) thus formed were later born as Dharmarāja, Bhīma, Arjuna, and the twins Nakula and Sahadēva by Yama (*the God of Death*), Vāyu (*the God of Wind*), Indra, and the Aṣvins (*twin Physicians of the Gods*) respectively. *Maha Bharata*

**Pāṇḍu** – Kshētraja* son of King Vichitravīrya (see **Ambālika**). Vichitravīrya died shortly after marrying Ambika and Ambālika, and there were no other heirs to the royal family (*while Bhīshma, queen Satyavati's stepson was there, he had taken a vow of life-long celibacy to facilitate his father's marriage to Satyavati. An older brother of Vichitravīrya, Chitrāngada, had also died young*). Satyavati then invited Sage Vyāsa (*born to her before*

*marriage, with her virginity remaining intact*) to beget sons by the widows of Vichitravīrya to avoid the ending of the Kuru dynasty. Ambālika slept with Vyāsa per her mother-in-law's direction, but since she was pale with fright on seeing the Sage, a Pānḍu (*albino*) son was born to her as a result. He was raised by Bhīshma and taught all the knowledge and skills appropriate to a prince. King Pānḍu married Kunti in a Swayamvara*. He also married Mādri, the daughter of the king of Madra. He ably assisted his older half-brother Dhṛtarāshṭra, Kshētraja son of his aunt Ambika in all activities of governance that the latter could not perform due to his congenital blindness. He undertook several victory campaigns in which he brought back untold amounts of wealth to Dhṛtarāshṭra from all the kings he defeated. King Pānḍu was well-liked, especially by the good-hearted among the population of the Kaurava empire.

Pānḍu was extremely fond of hunting to the point of being addicted to it. He and his wives spent much time in the forest. One day, he went out looking for game but could not find any animals. Finally, he spotted a deer couple mating and shot an arrow at them. The stag, hit by the arrow, fell to the ground and assuming his true human form, said "I am Kindama, a Muni. My wife and I took the form of deer for sport. It is immoral for anyone to attack mating animals." Taking this as a rebuke, Pānḍu became angry and said "I might forgive an enemy, but if I see an animal, I will hunt it." These intemperate words angered the Muni who then gave Pānḍu a Ṣāpa* that he will die if he ever makes love to one of his wives and that that wife will follow him in death.

Pānḍu, now thoroughly dejected, did not wish to return to

Hastināpura, the capital city. Abandoning any thoughts of sexual pleasure with his wives, he proceeded to live the life of a Muni, in the forest. Kunti and Mādri refused to leave him. Pāṇḍu and his wives stayed in the forest and he was performing Tapas.

Once, he noticed some Dēvarshis (*divine Sages*) ascending to heaven after performing Tapas* on Ṣataṣṛnga (*literally, 'a hundred peaks'*) mountain and tried to follow them, along with his wives. Informed by the Dēvarshis that the journey is impassable for child-less humans, he turned back and directed his first wife to beget children. She informed Pāṇḍu of the boon she had received from Sage Durvāsa (*which gave her the ability to summon any God by chanting a Mantra the Sage taught her, who would then give her a son*), and with his permission, obtained Dharmaja *('ja', when added to a word, means 'born from'; thus Dharmaja means 'born from Dharma', Dharma being one of the names of Yama, the God of Death and Justice. Dharmaja is generally referred to as Dharmarāja*) by Dharma. She got a son Bhīma, by Vāyu (*the God of Wind*) next. Pāṇḍu then directed her to worship Indra* for a year and beget a son by him. She got a son, Arjuna, by Indra. When the younger wife Mādri expressed a desire for motherhood, Pāṇḍu told her to request Kunti to teach her the Mantra and beget sons. With Kunti's help, Mādri invoked the Aṣvins (*twin physicians to the Dēvas*) and bore twin sons, Nakula and Sahadēva.

King Pāṇḍu and his wives continued their routine of Tapas. One day, while Kunti was serving a meal for some Brahmin guests, Pāṇḍu found the beautiful Mādri irresistibly lovely and ignoring her protests and Kindama's Ṣāpa, approached her with romantic

intent. As soon as he started lovemaking, he fell dead. Mādri immolated herself on his funeral pyre. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pāṇini** – The creator of grammar. Disciple of Varsha. Originally, he was a dimwit. He did not even perform properly the chores assigned to him by the Guru (*the tradition in ancient India was that when a Guru accepted a new disciple, the boy was assigned various chores and closely observed in the performance of the chores for several years. If the Guru decided, on the basis of his observation of the disciple, that it was safe to impart his knowledge to the boy, actual education started*). The Guru's wife then expelled him from her house. Pāṇini went to the Himālaya mountain, prayed to Lord Ṣiva and gained his Vidya (*education*). *Kathāsaritsāgara*

**Pāpapraṇāṣanam** – A holy place of pilgrimage. It is also known as Gālavam and Dhautapāpam. Once upon a time, there was a Brahmin named Dhrutavrata. His wife was Mahi. A son, Sanajāta was born to the couple. Dhrutavrata died when his son was still very young. His wife left her son at the Āṣram of Sage Gālava and became a promiscuous adulteress. The son also grew up into an evil man. Mother and son, wandering separately, happened to meet in a city. Unable to recognise each other, they engaged in sex together. Finding out after some time that they were actually mother and son, they were distressed. They went to Sage Gālava and begged him to tell them how to atone for their sin. He advised them to bathe in the sacred river Gautami. The place where they bathed and attained Mukti* came to be known as Pāpapraṇāṣanam. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Paramēshṭhi** – Son of Dēvadyumna and his wife Dhēnumati. His wife was Suvarchala. Their son was Pratīha. *Bhāgavata*

**Parāṣara I** – Disciple of Pyla's disciple Bāshkala. He learned the Samhita* of Ṛg Vēda. *Bhāgavata*

**Parāṣara II** – Grandson of Sage Vasishṭha. Son of Ṣakti and his wife Adṛṣyanti. While she was pregnant with Parāṣara, an Asura* swallowed her husband. One day, her son asked her, "Why don't you have the accoutrements of a married woman? Where is my father?" When she told him that his father was swallowed by an Asura, he went to Vasishṭha and told him that he would go and visit his father. Vasishṭha advised him to worship Lord Ṣiva. Parāṣara prayed to Ṣiva and when He appeared, Parāṣara told Him that he wished to see his dead father. By a boon granted by Ṣiva, Parāṣara was able to visit with his father in Swarga (*heaven*). Returning from Swarga, he started performing a Yāga for the purpose of destroying Asuras because an Asura had killed his father. Entire families of Asuras were being wiped out. Several Sages led by Sage Pulastya came to him and requested him to stop the Yāga. Respecting the Sages' advice, he stopped the Kratu (*another synonym for Yāga*) and left the sacred fire in a region north of the Himālaya mountain.

Once, while on a tour of Pilgrimage, he happened to see a beautiful young woman, Matsyagandhi (*literally, 'woman with the odor of fish'*) piloting a boat on the Narmada river, and instantly fell in love with her. Being a virgin, she was hesitant to fulfill his desire for her, without being given in marriage to him by her parents. Parāṣara assured her that she will not lose her virginity because of his spiritual power gained by Tapas*, gave her the boon

of lovely fragrance, gave her Divya (*divine*) ornaments, created artificial darkness and made love to her. Vyāsa was born to them. *Bhāgavata*

**Parasu** – An Asura* who had the ability to be invisible or to take any shape he desired. One day, he took the form of a Brahmin, went to the Āṣram of Sage Sākalya and said "I am hungry. Give me a meal." The Muni served him a meal. After the ritual sprinkling of water over the food, he said "This food is not sufficient for me. I am an Asura. I will chew you up as well." The Muni replied "Lord Brahma and the Dēvas protect my body from head to foot. How can you eat me? Eat the meal I gave you and go away." The Asura stood up and moved towards the Muni. All of a sudden, the Muni looked to him as if he had a thousand heads and two thousand arms. Parasu was terrified and said "You are no ordinary human. Forgive me and please teach me Gjnāna (*knowledge*)." Sage Sākalya advised him to bathe in the Gautami river and pray to Goddess Sarasvati (*Consort of Lord Brahma and Goddess of Learning and the Arts*). *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Paraṣurāma** – Son of Sage Jamadagni and his wife Rēṇuka. His given name was Rāma (*sixth incarnation of Lord Vishṇu. He was better known as Paraṣurāma, while the seventh incarnation is usually referred to simply as Rāma*). Ramaṇvanta, Sushēshaṇa, Vasu and Viṣvāvasu were his older brothers. Once, Jamadagni said to his sons, "Your mother committed adultery with King Chitraratha. Go and kill her." The four older sons told him they will not commit matricide so Jamadagni gave them a Ṣāpa*. Then he asked Rāma to kill his mother. Rāma, without any hesitation, killed his mother, came back and reported to his father that the

deed was done. Pleased by his youngest son's courage and devotion to him, Jamadagni asked him to request a boon. Rāma asked him to revive his mother and withdraw the Ṣāpa he had given to his four brothers and to bless him so that he would always be victorious. Jamadagni acceded to his request and revived Rēṇuka. Rāma took his father's permission and went to the Āṣram of Ruchīka, his paternal grandfather. After staying there a few days, he went to the Āṣram of Sage Aurva. Taking his leave of Aurva, he was proceeding to the Āṣram of his great-grandfather (*paternal grandfather of Sage Jamadagni*) Sage Bhṛgu. As he approached, Bhṛgu's disciples, unable to withstand his Tējas*, closed their eyes. Bhṛgu welcomed him affectionately and said "Son! I will tell you something that will be beneficial to both you and us. The whole world will benefit from this. Go to the Himālaya mountain and perform Tapas* directed towards Lord Ṣiva. All your wishes will be fulfilled." Rāma, accordingly, went to the Himālayas and started performing Tapas. Even the Munis around were astounded at his concentration on the Tapas. Lord Ṣiva, intending to test his resolve, came disguised as a hunter and shouted loudly "Who are you? Why did you come here?" After a little while, Rāma opened his eyes and answered respectfully. When the hunter did not leave, Rāma said "Sir! If you stay nearby, my Tapas will be spoiled. Go away. If you do not wish to leave, you also sit here and perform Tapas." An argument ensued between them. Rāma realized, while talking to him that the hunter was a great man and prostrated himself before him. Ṣiva, pleased with Rāma's devotion, raised him up and said "Rāma! You are still very young. You are not powerful enough to be given the

Raudrāstra (*Lord Ṣiva's signature weapon*). Come back after undertaking a pilgrimage tour." Rāma stopped his Tapas, visited many holy places on his pilgrimage, returned to resume his Tapas.

Meanwhile, the Dēvas, led by Indra*, approached Lord Ṣiva and begged Him to protect them from the Asuras* who were destroying their city. Ṣiva sent one of His devotees, Mahōdara (*a Nāga, an articulate serpent, son of Kadruva*) to bring Rāma to Him. Rāma immediately went to Ṣiva. Ṣiva directed him to go to Indra's city and drive the Asuras away. Rāma said "Lord! Is there anything you do not know? The Asuras are very powerful. How can I defeat them?" Ṣiva gave Rāma a Paraṣu (*Sanskrit for 'battleaxe', the weapon unique to Rāma, the son of Jamadagni, because of which he came to be known as Paraṣurāma*). At the same time, Ṣiva's Tējas* entered Paraṣurāma. Paraṣurāma then went to Indra's city, drove the Asuras away, gave the city back to the Dēvas, returned to his place and resumed his Tapas. Ṣiva, extremely pleased with his devotion, gave Paraṣurāma the boon of constant devotion and the weapon called Bhārgavāstra.

Some time later, Paraṣurāma, on his way to see his parents, saw a tiger about to pounce on a Brahmin boy. He deployed the Brahmāstra at the tiger, intending to save the boy's life. The tiger fell to the ground. A Gandharva* rose from it and greeting Paraṣurāma with a Namaskāra*, said "I became a tiger due to a Ṣāpa" and returned to the abode of Gandharvas. Paraṣurāma promised his protection to the boy still shaking with fear.

The boy was the son of a Muni named Ṣānta. He had lost his way on a journey of pilgrimage. His name was Akṛtavraṇa. He became a disciple and friend of Paraṣurāma.

Accompanied by Akṛtavraṇa, Paraṣurāma again visited the Āṣrams of Bhṛgu, Aurva, and Ruchīka to their delight, and proceeded to his parents' home. He narrated to them everything he had done since leaving home. King Hayahaya visited Jamadagni's Āṣram and returned after receiving very hospitable treatment. Paraṣurāma went to the forest together with Akṛtavraṇa. While there, Paraṣurāma felt depressed and mentally disturbed. Concerned that some disaster was about to happen, he returned home and saw his mother wailing over the dead body of his father, killed by Hayahaya. His mother beat her chest twenty one times in her grief. After consoling her, Paraṣurāma took a vow that since a king killed his father for no reason, he would conduct twenty one campaigns of killing Kshatriyas (*the caste of kings and warriors*). He was then preparing to perform the funeral rites for his father. Sage Bhṛgu arrived just then, and by sprinkling some holy water and intoning a Mantra, brought Jamadagni back to life. While attending to his revived father's needs, Paraṣurāma informed him of his vow to kill Kshatriyas twenty one times. Jamadagni tried to pacify his son but Paraṣurāma insisted that he cannot let people who kill for no reason, live. Unable to shake his son of his determination to kill Kshatriyas, Jamadagni advised him to go to Lord Brahma and act in accordance with His advice. Paraṣurāma went to Brahma. Brahma, unwilling to see all the Kshatriyas created by Himself be destroyed, said "What you are planning will be impossible without the blessing of Lord Ṣiva. Go and seek His advice."

Paraṣurāma went to Ṣiva, who was with His Consort Pārvati, and prayed to Him. Pārvati said to him "What is there that you

cannot accomplish if you have Ṣiva's blessing? But you do not seem to have any weapons." Ṣiva gave him weapons and a suit of body armor. After receiving them, Paraṣurāma placed them on the shore of a lake and sat down to perform Japam (*chanting a Mantra over and over*). A deer couple came there running as if they were being chased by a hunter, and were drinking from the lake. However, Paraṣurāma could not see a hunter. Seeing him, the male deer (see **Sūriṣarma**) said to his mate "We have no need to be afraid anymore. The man doing Japam here is Paraṣurāma and the other man with him is Akṛtavraṇa. Paraṣurāma is about to perform Tapas to obtain the Kṛshṇa Kavacha (*Kavacha is Sanskrit for 'protective armor'*). But it is impossible to obtain it except by going to Agastya's Āṣram and listening to Ṣrī Kṛshṇa Stōtra (*Sanskrit for 'praise in song'*)." Paraṣurāma was amazed to hear these words being spoken by a deer and proceeded towards Agastya's Āṣram. The deer and doe followed him. On the way, they encountered the hunter who tried to kill the deer and doe earlier. Paraṣurāma killed him. The deer and the doe reached Agastya's Āṣram along with Paraṣurāma, listened to the Ṣrī Kṛshṇa Stōtra and attained Mukti* as a result.

Afterwards, Paraṣurāma prayed to Lord Kṛshṇa (*while most Purāṇas show that Vishṇu's incarnation as Kṛshṇa, chronologically, followed Paraṣurāma and Rāma, there is a school of belief that Vishṇu and Kṛshṇa are the same, meaning Kṛshṇa existed before and apart from the incarnation at about the time of the Mahā Bhārata*). Kṛshṇa appeared to him and gave His Kavacha. Kṛshṇa disappeared after telling Paraṣurāma "From now on, my aspect will be in you (*meaning Paraṣurāma became an*

*incarnation of Vishṇu/Kṛshṇa*). I will take it back during my Rāma incarnation, after I protect Sage Viṣvāmitra's Yāga and marry Sīta."

Then, Paraṣurāma bathed in the Narmada River, went to the city of King Kārtavīrya and sent a message to the king through an emissary that he, Sage Jamadagni's son, was there to kill him. Kārtavīrya sent a response through the same emissary that he never denies any wish of a Brahmin and that he would give war to one who asked for war. The king alerted his commanders to prepare for war. Kārtavīrya's soldiers attacked Paraṣurāma. Paraṣurāma routed them using the Paraṣu (*battleaxe*) given to him by Ṣiva,. The kings of several kingdoms, including Matsya, Magadha, Nishādha, Vidarbha (*King Sōmadatta*), and Mithila (*King Bṛhadbala*), were all killed by Paraṣurāma. The kings of Kanyākubja and Saurāshṭra and warriors of Avanti simultaneously rained arrows on Paraṣurāma. He deflected them all and killed the kings. Suchandra engaged Paraṣurāma in a one-on-one combat and hurled Ṣiva's Triṣūla (*trident*) at him. It turned into a flower garland and decorated Paraṣurāma's neck. Kāḷi (*a form of Dēvi, the Supreme Being*) appeared to Paraṣurāma and informed him that Suchandra can be killed by the Āgnēyāstra (*weapon that invokes Agni, the God of Fire*), and disappeared. After Suchandra was killed, his son Pushkarāksha attacked Paraṣurāma and was killed. Finally, Kārtavīrya himself entered the fray. Paraṣurāma fell to the ground when Kārtavīrya hit him with a trident. The Dēvas all came and Ṣiva used the Sanjīvani (*a magical herb that can restore the dead to life*) to revive him. Paraṣurāma rose, put on the Ṣiva Kavacha (*suit of armor Ṣiva had given him*) and with an arrow, severed Kārtavīrya's head. He then killed Kārtavīrya's sons.

After killing many Kshatriya warriors, Paraṣurāma bathed in the Narmada river, performed the daily ablutions and went to Kailāsa (*Lord Ṣiva's mountanous abode*). As he was about to enter Ṣiva's palace, Vighnēṣwara (*son of Lord Ṣiva with the head of an elephant*) blocked him and told him that he could not enter because Ṣiva was in bed with His Consort Pārvati at the time. An argument occurred between Vighnēṣwara and Paraṣurāma and escalated into hand-to-hand combat. Vighnēṣwara picked up Paraṣurāma with His trunk and raised him high above the ground. All seven upper worlds appeared to a terrified Paraṣurāma. Angry and humiliated, he used his Paraṣu to strike at Vighnēṣwara. One of Vighnēṣwara's tusks broke and fell to the ground. The noise made by the tusk as it fell frightened the Dēvas. Pārvati and Ṣiva came out to see what the commotion was about. Vighnēṣwara described the mishap that befell Him. Pārvati was angry that someone that they had helped would attack Her son. Ṣiva, caught in a bind, 'thought of'* Kṛshṇa. Kṛshṇa came, consoled Pārvati and begged Her to forgive Paraṣurāma and consider him like Her child. Paraṣurāma prayed to Pārvati and was forgiven.

Paraṣurāma went home, greeted his father with a Namaskāra and narrated all the actions he had taken. His father advised him to go to Mahēndranagara and perform Tapas for many years to wash away the sin of killing many kings. As he was following his father's advice and performing Tapas, he learnt after some time that one of Kārtavīrya's sons had killed his father and that his mother had immolated herself on her husband's funeral pyre. Bitter with anger, he vowed to kill every king and use their blood to present offerings to his father's soul. He then went on another

killing spree, killing not only Kārtavīrya's sons (*those who must have escaped his first campaign*) but any other king he found. Still not satisfied, he used the Āgnēyāstra (*weapon that invokes Agni, the God of Fire*) to burn down Kārtavīrya's city.

After killing the Hayahayas and other kings, Paraṣurāma calmed down and in a kinder frame of mind, went to Tapōvana*. Some years later, King Parāvasu, grandson of Sage Viṣvāmitra (*who was a king before he became a Sage*) came to him and sarcastically asked "Are you hiding here, afraid of kings?" He also encouraged a king named Pratardhana and other Kshatriyas who escaped Paraṣurāma's earlier onslaught because they were too young or too old, to go to war against Paraṣurāma. Paraṣurāma, returning to his vengeful mood towards Kshatriyas, hunted them down and killed every one of them including the unborn.

Some kings, terrified of Paraṣurāma's wrath, hid among women and herds of cattle. Hearing that Brahmins were creating Kshatriyas again, he conducted twenty one campaigns against them and killed not only warriors but children. He filled five lakes near Kurukshētra (*the battlefield of the Mahā Bhārata war*) with their blood which he used for his father's funeral oblations. The five lakes came to be known as Ṣamantapanchaka.

As Rāma (*Vishṇu's seventh incarnation, next after Paraṣurāma. To avoid confusion with Paraṣurāma, whose given name was also Rāma, He will be referred to as 'Raghu Rāma' in the rest of this section*), after marrying Sīta, was returning to Ayōdhya, Paraṣurāma blocked His way. Daṣaratha (*Raghu Rāma's father, who was well aware of Paraṣurāma's sworn enmity with Kshatriyas and his prowess*) begged Paraṣurāma to not hurt his

son. Paraṣurāma ignored his pleas and vowed to kill Raghu Rāma. Adding to his enmity with Kshatriyas, he was upset with Raghu Rāma for breaking the bow of Lord Ṣiva and challenged Raghu Rāma to string his bow. Severely annoyed by Paraṣurāma's arrogance, Raghu Rāma grabbed his bow and easily strung it. Paraṣurāma, realizing that Raghu Rāma was Vishṇu Himself (*that he was no longer the incarnation of Vishṇu and that the mantle has been passed to Raghu Rāma*), saluted Him with a Namaskāra and went away.

Once, as Paraṣurāma was offering oblations to his ancestors' souls, they said "Son! You are not free from the sins you had committed. Perform a Vrata*." Paraṣurāma returned to Mahēndranagara and was performing Tapas again. Some Munis approached him and advised him to perform an Aṣvamēdha Yāga. As Paraṣurāma started the Yāga, many Munis came to watch the Yāga. When he inquired about their well-being, they informed him that a holy place of pilgrimage, Gōkarṇa, was being submerged in the sea and requested him to rescue the place. Paraṣurāma pointed out that he was performing a Vrata as directed by his ancestors and he is not allowed to take up arms during the Vrata. A Muni named Ṣushka ruled that interrupting the Vrata will not attach a sin to him. Paraṣurāma then set out to do what the Munis desired. He went to the sea and summoned Varuṇa (*the God of Rain and therefore, of the Sea*). Varuṇa did not come. Still calm, Paraṣurāma called out again to him. The God still did not respond. Paraṣurāma then launched the Āgnēyāstra. A fire engulfed the area as a result. Samudra (*ocean. In the Purāṇas, oceans and mountains are anthropomorphed into men*) came, begged Paraṣurāma's pardon,

and promised to retreat as far as Paraṣurāma wished. To show the extent of retreat, Paraṣurāma threw a Sruva (*wooden ladle*). It landed sixteen miles away. The sea retreated to the point where it landed. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

While Paraṣurāma was at Mahēndranagara, Karṇa came to him and requested that he be taught the mighty weapon Brahmāstra. When Paraṣurāma asked what his caste was (*in an effort to keep very powerful weapons controlled by Mantras from being learnt by someone with evil intent, protocols were established by which only someone from the Brahmin or Kshatriya caste, who had faithfully served the Guru long enough to convince the Guru that he is a good person, would be taught the Mantra*), he lied that he was a Brahmin. He learnt the Brahmāstra from Paraṣurāma. One day, Paraṣurāma slept with his head resting on Karṇa's lap. An insect bit Karṇa and the wound was bleeding profusely. However, Karṇa sat still, not wanting to disturb Paraṣurāma's sleep. Paraṣurāma then woke up to find a puddle of blood, and realized that if Karṇa were a Brahmin, he would not have the stamina to keep his bleeding leg from moving. He then demanded that Karṇa tell him the truth about his caste. Karṇa then confessed that he was a Sūta (*lower caste*). Paraṣurāma, enraged by Karṇa's deceit, told him "Since you learned these weapons from me by deceit, you will not remember the Brahmāstra when you could make best use of it, but only when you are about to die. On seeing Paraṣurāma, the insect was released from a Ṣāpa and went away.

Once, a Rājarshi (*royal Sage*) named Hōtravāhana and his daughter Amba encountered Paraṣurāma in the forest. Hōtravāhana narrated to Paraṣurāma how Bhīshma abducted Amba and her

sisters, how Amba had loved Sālva and how Sālva rejected her because she had been under the control of another man. When Paraṣurāma asked, "Who should I deceive? Sālva? Or Bhīshma?" they said Bhīshma. Paraṣurāma took Amba along and went to Bhīshma and asked him to persuade his half-brother to marry Amba. Bhīshma refused to intercede because Amba had loved another man and therefore, was not eligible to marry the future emperor of the Kuru dynasty. Paraṣurāma then fought Bhīshma (*it was the convention in that era that the loser of a fight has to obey the victor. Paraṣurāma, who was Bhīshma's Guru, might have assumed that he could defeat Bhīshma*) and the intense fight went on for twenty four days without a conclusion. Dēvas and Ṛshis (*Sages with great spiritual powers*) came and implored them to stop fighting. Paraṣurāma gave up and told Amba that he could not help her and went on his way.

Paraṣurāma donated the land he had acquired by killing many kings on his twenty one campaigns to Sage Kaṣyapa. Kaṣyapa demanded that Paraṣurāma should not stay in any of the lands he had donated and instead, should go past the southern sea. Paraṣurāma crossed the ocean as Samudra, afraid of him, gave way.

Paraṣurāma will be one of the Saptarshis* in the future Manvantara (*reign as Manu**) of Sūrya Sāvarṇi. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Parāvasu I** – A king. Grandson of Sage Viṣvāmitra (*who was a king before he became a Sage*). After killing many kings of the Hayahaya dynasty, Paraṣurāma (*Lord Vishṇu's sixth incarnation*) let go of his anger at Kshatriyas (*warrior caste of kings*) and was performing Tapas*. This king, with overweening arrogance, went

to him and heckled him saying "Are you hiding here in fear of Kshatriyas?" He also encouraged a king named Pratardhana and other Kshatriyas who escaped Paraṣurāma's onslaught because they were too young or too old, to war against Paraṣurāma. Paraṣurāma, returning to his vengeful mood towards Kshatriyas, hunted them down and killed every one of them including the unborn. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*

**Parāvasu II** – A Brahmin. Son of Sage Raibhya. Younger brother of Arvāvasu. Both brothers were proficient in the Vēdas. Another Brahmin named Avakrīta was intensely jealous of them. One day, Avakrīta, lusting for Parāvasu's wife Kṛshṇa, expressed to her his desire. Raibhya had him killed.

Parāvasu and Arvāvasu went to the Sabha (*court*) of King Bṛhadyumna to act as the Vēdic priests of a Yāga. Parāvasu unknowingly killed his father in the dark, mistaking him for an animal. When he saw he had killed his father rather than an animal, he was stricken with grief and informed his brother of what he did and suggested that Arvāvasu officiate at the king's Yāga. When Arvāvasu asserted that he cannot officiate by himself at the Yāga, Parāvasu went and helped the king complete the Yāga. Arvāvasu went home and performed Hōmas* to rid his brother of the sin of killing a Brahmin.

After performing the required Prāyaṣchitta (*penance*) for the sin of killing a Brahmin, Arvāvasu went back to King Bṛhadyumna's Yāga. Parāvasu, who was acting as the priest at the king's Yāga, told the king not to allow Arvāvasu to enter the Yāga hall because Arvāvasu had to perform severe rites of absolution from the sin of killing a Brahmin. Arvāvasu revealed that it was Parāvasu and not

he, that committed the sin of killing a Brahmin and that he had already done what was needed for absolution. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Parīkshit I** – A king of the Sūrya (*solar; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Chandra, or lunar*) dynasty. Once, while hunting in the forest, he saw a beautiful woman, fell in love with her and expressed his desire to her. She told him she would marry him if he promised to never dip her in water. Parīkshit agreed and they married. One day, forgetting his promise to her, he took her with him to a lake and made her take a dip in the water with him. She disappeared immediately. Suspecting that the frogs in the lake had killed her, he started killing frogs on sight. Her father Āyu, taking the form of a Brahmin (*because a king cannot deny any request from a Brahmin*), went to Parīkshit and requested him to stop the genocide against frogs. He revealed that he is the king of frogs and that Parīkshit's wife Suṣōbhana was his daughter. When the king asked him to bring his wife back to him, Āyu did so and saying she had deceived many kings, he gave his daughter a Ṣāpa* that her sons will behave deceitfully. Parīkshit welcomed her back and sons named Ṣala, Dala and Nala (*different from the famous king and husband of Damayanti*) were born to them. He crowned the eldest son as king and went to the forest. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Parīkshit II** – Son of Abhimanyu and his wife Uttara; grandson of Arjuna. While he was still in his mother's womb, Aṣvatthāma deployed a powerful weapon, Brahmaṣira, against him. Unable to withstand the pain it caused her, Uttara prayed to Lord Kṛshṇa. Her pain was relieved and her baby was saved by His kind intercession. He came to be known as Parīkshit because he was

doing Parīksha (*examination*) of the world for the God he saw while in the womb, thinking that He was everywhere. He married his uncle Uttara's daughter Irāvati and their son was Janamējaya. His great-uncle Dharmarāja and his brothers crowned him emperor before they left for the Himālaya mountain.

Bhūdēvi (*Goddess Earth*) was despondent when Lord Kṛshṇa ended His incarnation. Dharmadēva (*the God of Righteousness. The epochs or Yugas are classified by the number of legs that support Dharma – four in the first, Kṛta, three in Trēta, two in Dwāpara and only one in Kali, the one that started at the end of the Mahā Bhārata war, making it wobbly and unstable*) commiserated with her and was supported on only one leg. Then Kali Purusha (*Purusha is Sanskrit for 'man'. Kali Purusha is the Kali Yuga personified*), taking the form of a bull, kicked Dharma. Seeing this atrocity, Parīkshit thundered that he will punish Kali Purusha. When a terrified Kali begged his forgiveness, he ordered him to leave his empire and restored Dharma's four legs. *Mahā Bhārata*

Parīkshit ruled for sixty years. One day, he went to the forest to hunt. After chasing after an animal for a long time, he reached the Āṣram of Sage Ṣamīka and asked the Sage about the whereabouts of the animal he was chasing. The Sage did not hear him or see him, being in Samādhi (*deep meditation*). Furious at being ignored, the king picked up a dead serpent lying nearby and put it around Ṣamīka's neck and went away. Ṣamīka's son Ṣṛngi, hearing of what the king had done, came and removed the dead serpent from his father's neck, proclaimed a Ṣāpa* that whoever put a dead serpent around his father's neck would die by a serpent bite

within a week, and informed his father of what had happened when Ṣamīka came out of Samādhi and opened his eyes. Ṣamīka was upset that the king had been given a Ṣāpa and explained to his son that it was improper to give a Ṣāpa to the king who was their protector. But once given, the Ṣāpa could not be countermanded. The best he could do was to send one of his disciples to forewarn the king of the Ṣāpa. Regretting his foolish action of putting the dead serpent around the Sage's neck, Parīkshit had a secure palace built in a place that was inaccessible to serpents. He stayed in this palace, in a Prāyōpavishṭa (*Sanskrit for 'abstaining from food and sitting awaiting death'*) status, listening to Sage Ṣuka narrating devotional stories. On the seventh day after the Ṣāpa, some serpents, taking the forms of Brahmin men, brought him some lemons as gifts. Parīkshit took one of the lemons brought by the fake Brahmins to his nose to smell it. Takshaka, who was hiding in the lemon, came out of the fruit and bit him. Parīkshit was unable to avoid the effects of Ṣṛngi's Ṣāpa and died. *Bhāgavata*

**Parīkshit III** – Son of Anaṣva. His wife was Suyaṣa. Their son was Bhīmasēna (*not one of the Pānḍavas*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pāriyātra** – Son of King Ahīna of the Sūrya (*solar; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Chandra, or lunar*) dynasty. His son was Bala. *Bhāgavata*

**Parṇāda** – A Brahmin. He was sent by Damayanti to search for her husband Nala. He reported back to Damayanti that the only person who responded with the right words was an ugly man who was a servant of Ṛtuparṇa, the king of Ayōdhya. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Parvata I** – A Muni. Nephew of Sage Nārada, and like him, freely

travelled all over the three worlds (*Swarga or heaven, Bhūmi or earth, and Pātāḷa or netherworld*). Once he and Sage Nārada both desired the hand of Ṣrīmati, daughter of King Ambarīsha, in marriage. Ambarīsha promised to give his daughter in marriage to one of them. Both Nārada and Parvata, each without the other's knowledge, approached Vishṇu and asked for the same boon, namely that his rival's face be turned into that of a monkey. Saying yes to each, Vishṇu gave both of them monkey faces. Unaware that his own face was also that of a monkey, they both confidently attended a Swayamvara* for Ṣrīmati. Vishṇu also went there but was visible only to Ṣrīmati. Ṣrīmati chose Vishṇu as her husband. Disappointed but not knowing whom Ṣrīmati had chosen, they returned home. Sometime later, they happened to see Ṣrīmati in Vishṇu's residence. Because He took away the woman each of them wanted to marry and caused them sadness from failure, they gave Vishṇu a Ṣāpa* saying "You will experience the grief of forced separation from your wife and will regain her only with the help of Vānaras*." *Linga Purāṇa; Ṣiva Purāṇa*

While travelling all over the three worlds (*Swarga, or heaven; earth; and Pātāḷa or netherworld*), Nārada and Parvata made an agreement that they will share everything in their hearts and not keep any secrets between them and that either of them violating this agreement will receive a Ṣāpa from the other. Once, when Nārada and Parvata visited King Sṛnjaya, the king designated his daughter Sukumāri to look after them and attend to their needs. Nārada fell in love with her but was too ashamed to tell his nephew about it. Discovering Nārada's amorous intent after some time, Parvata told Nārada "Since you violated our agreement by

keeping your love for her a secret from me, I am giving you a Ṣāpa that you will have a monkey-face after you marry her." Angered by this (*even though he did break a promise and the penalty agreed-to was a Ṣāpa*), Nārada countered with his own Ṣāpa, namely that Parvata will lose his access to Swarga. Nārada asked Sṛnjaya for his daughter's hand in marriage and married her (*she consented to marry Nārada even after learning that he will have a monkey face*). Some time passed before Nārada and his nephew met again. Each of them released the other from his Ṣāpa. Nārada found his face had regained its human shape when he returned home. Sukumāri did not recognise him at first but Parvata assured her that the person she was looking at was, in fact, her husband Nārada.

Intending to do a favour to King Sṛnjaya, Nārada gave him a boon that a son will be born to him. Parvata announced that the son will have a short life. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Parvata II** – Son of Ṣilāda. He prayed to Lord Ṣiva and became a mountain (*in the Purāṇas, mountains are anthropomorphed into men*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pārvati** – Daughter of Mēnaka (*different from the famous Apsara**) and her husband Himavanta (*the Himālaya mountain. In the Purāṇas, mountains are anthropomorphed into men*). She was Sati, daughter of Daksha and Consort of Lord Ṣiva in Her previous life in which Ṣiva was purposely treated with disrespect by Daksha. Once, Lord Vishṇu and other Dēvas came to Himavanta's house and informed him that Sati will be born to Mēnaka. Pārvati was born, as predicted. Himavanta showed Her horoscope to Sage Nārada, who told him that Ṣiva will become Pārvati's husband.

Ṣiva was performing Tapas* on the Himālaya mountain. At the time, an Asura* named Tāraka, armed with a powerful boon from Lord Brahma, was harassing the Dēvas. They learnt that no one other than a son of Ṣiva could defeat Tāraka. They thought of a plan to make Ṣiva stop His Tapas and beget a son. Indra* and other Dēvas directed Manmatha (*the God of Love who uses arrows of flowers to turn his target's heart towards the opposite sex*) to distract Ṣiva from His Tapas and turn Him to thoughts of romance. Hit by Manmatha's arrow, Ṣiva was momentarily attracted towards Pārvati, who was in the vicinity at the time. Immediately afterwards, he opened His third eye to burn Manmatha to ashes and moved to another spot to continue His Tapas.

Then, Pārvati started performing Tapas directed towards Ṣiva. The intensity of Her Tapas created unbearable heat. Brahma and other Dēvas came to Ṣiva and pleaded with Him to accept Pārvati as His Consort. Himavanta prayed to Ṣiva, took Him to his house and gave Him Pārvati in marriage. Pārvati accompanied Her husband to His abode, Kailāsa.

Brahma directed Ṣiva to procreate. Considering that it is not possible to procreate without Tapas, He went to perform Tapas. Meanwhile, Brahma hid Pārvati within His body. When Ṣiva went to destroy Daksha's Yāga, a battle occurred there between Ṣiva and Vishṇu. Brahma calmed them down and returned Pārvati whom He had hidden, to Ṣiva. *Varāha Purāṇa*

After their marriage, Ṣiva and Pārvati stayed in Himavanta's house for a long time. Mēnaka started to complain that her son-in-law lacked good looks, wealth and a residence. Pārvati happened to hear these complaints. Hurt by Her mother's words, She

suggested to Her husband that they should leave Her parents' house. Ṣiva directed the captain of His Gaṇas (*Ṣiva's retinue*), Nikumbha, to take the city of Kāṣi* from King Divōdās and drive him away. Nikumbha turned Kāṣi into an unoccupied city and took Ṣiva and Pārvati there.

Once, Pārvati, while taking a bath, made a male doll out of cleansing paste She had applied to Her body, gave life to it and put him at the door and instructed the boy not to allow anyone to enter. He stood at the door to guard it. Ṣiva came home just then. The boy told Him that He cannot enter. Annoyed, Ṣiva beheaded him with His Trident and went inside. When Pārvati saw that Ṣiva had been able to enter, She checked at the door and saw the dead boy. She was devastated and angrily told Her husband that if He did not bring Her dear creation back to life, She will destroy the whole world. Ṣiva then directed His guards to bring the head of a creature sleeping with head facing north. They killed an elephant and brought its head. Ṣiva attached the head to the boy's neck and revived him. The boy was Vighnēṣwara. Pārvati considered him Her son.

Once the Asura Jalandhara, using his shape-shifting powers, took on the form of Ṣiva and went to Pārvati with some of his band of Asuras disguised as Gaṇas. One of the Asuras who took the form of a Gaṇa announced to Pārvati that Ṣiva had come to see her. However, he then froze and became like a statue. Realizing that someone is deceiving her with magic and illusion, Pārvati went away in fear and 'thought of'* Vishṇu. He then came to Her and asked, "What would you like me to do for you? Whatever you wish, I will gladly do." Pārvati said, "You need to make Bṛnda

(*Jalandhara's wife*) commit adultery because as long as Bṛnda remains faithful and devoted to her husband, Jalandhara will not surrender." *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

While the devotees of Ṣiva and Pārvati were begetting children due to their blessings, Pārvati Herself remained childless. Even opportunities for lovemaking were becoming interrupted. Hoping to avoid intrusions, Ṣiva and Pārvati found what they thought was a very secret place, the Kumāra forest, and were enjoying a romantic interlude there. Pārvati was naked. All of a sudden, some Munis came there. Seeing them, Pārvati felt embarrassed and angry. She put a spell on the forest that any male who enters it will be turned into a female. *Bhāgavata*

Once, while Ṣiva and Pārvati were alone and engaged in foreplay, Agni stood in front of them. Pārvati moved away on seeing the intruder. As Ṣiva ejaculated, Pārvati commanded Agni to receive the semen. Later, Ganga received it and placed it in some grass. Kumāraswāmi was born from that semen.

Another day, Pārvati was making love to Her husband and both were experiencing intense pleasure in sex. Pārvati was hoping to beget a son. Just then, the Dēvas came to visit Ṣiva and said " Lord! Can we survive a son of Ṣiva and Pārvati (*He is the most powerful and fearsome of the Trimūrti and Pārvati, a manifestation or at least an aspect of Dēvi, the Supreme Being Herself*)? Please do not have sex." Ṣiva separated Himself from Pārvati and moved away. Pārvati, enraged, gave them a Ṣāpa* that since the Dēvas prevented Her from having a child, none of them would have children with their wives. She also added a Ṣāpa that they would turn into trees. Vishṇu became a fig tree due to this

Ṣāpa.

Seeing Ganga on Ṣiva's head made Pārvati intensely jealous. She asked Vighnēṣwara and Kumāraswāmi to bring Ganga down from Ṣiva's head. They told Her that only Sage Gautama can bring her (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*) down. As a cow was lying dead on Gautama's farm, Vighnēṣwara advised the Sage that if he brings Ganga and sprinkles the water on the dead cow, she will regain life. Gautama prayed to Ṣiva and brought Ganga down from His head. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Paṣupati** – One of the names of Lord Ṣiva. All the Dēvas attended the Yāga (*in which Ṣiva was purposely treated with disrespect*) by Daksha Prajāpati*. Ṣiva created many demons and monsters to destroy the Yāga and the place where it was being performed. After destroying the Yāga, these creatures were attacking the Dēvas. The Dēvas prayed to Ṣiva, saying "By aligning ourselves with Daksha, we have become Paṣu (*Sanskrit for 'beasts'*). Please protect us." Ṣiva agreed and called off His minions. Ṣiva acquired the name Paṣupati (*Sanskrit for 'Lord of the beasts'*) by protecting the Dēvas from their behaviour akin to beasts. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Paṣusakha** – He and his wife Chanḍi were devotees of the Saptarshis*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pātāḷakētu** – An Asura*. Brother of Tāḷakētu. Once, he abducted Madālasa, the daughter of a Gandharva* king and hid her in Pātāḷa (*netherworld which is home to many Asuras and Nāgas**). A Sage, Gālava wished to stop his harassment by giving him a Ṣāpa*. However, he was not willing to use up spiritual power obtained by intense Tapas* to punish him. He just looked up at the sky and

from there, a horse emerged. He gave the horse to King Ṛtadhwaja and requested him to kill Pātāḷakētu. Ṛtadhwaja riding the horse Kuvalayāṣva, chased Pātāḷakētu. The Asura assumed the form of a wild boar and entered an underground tunnel. Ṛtadhwaja followed him into the tunnel and killed him. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Pāṭalīputra** – A city on the shores of the Ganga river. It was so named to memorialize Pāṭalī and her husband Putraka. When Putraka, using a stick he took from the sons of Maya* by deceit, drew a plan of a city on the ground, it actually became a city, Pāṭalīputra. *Kathāsaritsāgara*

**Patanjali** – Son of Prāchīnayōgi. He authored six collections of commentaries, including on Vararuchi's 'Rules of Grammar'. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Pathya** – He learnt the Atharva Vēda from a disciple of Sumanta and taught it to Kumuda, Ṣuka, Jābāli, Babhru, Āngirasa, and Saindhavāyana. *Bhāgavata*

**Paulōma** – One of the Nārī Tīrthas*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Paunḍra** – The conch (*each great warrior had a conch with a distinct sound, which they used to announce their arrival on the battlefield*) of Bhīma. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Paunḍraka Vāsudēva** – King of the country of Karūṣa. Once, while Lord Kṛshṇa went to visit Kailāsa (*the mountain abode of Lord Ṣiva*), this king went to Dwāraka (*Kṛshṇa's city in the sea*) and publicly proclaiming "Could there be two Vāsudēvas in the world? How dare a shepherd take my name? I too have a mace and Sudarṣana (*name of Kṛshṇa's unique weapon, the Chakra**). I am

the true Vāsudēva", he was abusing Kṛshṇa. Sātyaki (*Lord Kṛshṇa's friend and constant companion*) drove him from Dwāraka. Paunḍraka Vāsudēva then went to the king of Kāṣi*, and recruited him to the cause of opposing Kṛshṇa. He then sent an emissary to Kṛshṇa to demand that Kṛshṇa renounce the name Vāsudēva. Kṛshṇa invited Paunḍraka Vāsudēva and his ally to come and fight Him. Paunḍraka Vāsudēva and the king of Kāṣi responded to the invitation. Kṛshṇa killed them both in battle. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pauravati** – Wife of Dharmarāja (*each of the Pānḍavas had at least one wife he did not share with his brothers, in addition to Draupadi, shared by all five*). They had a son named Dēvaka. *Bhāgavata*

**Paurika** – The king of the city of Purika. He was cruel. In his next life, he was born as a fox. In that life, he had full memory of his past life. Unlike other foxes, he did not eat meat but survived on leaves and fruit that fell from trees. He would not eat meat even when other foxes offered him some. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Paushpanji** – Son of Jaimini's son Sumanta. He learnt the Sāma Vēda (*the science of music*) from his father and taught it to two groups of two hundred people named Āvantyas and Udītyas. *Bhāgavata*

**Paushya Mahādēvi** – Wife of Paushya Mahārāja. She had the special attribute of being invisible to unclean persons. When Sage Udanka came to ask her for her earrings, he could not see her at first. It was only after he washed his face, hands and feet and did Āchamana (*sipped holy water*) that she appeared to him and gave

him her earrings. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Paushya Mahārāja** – A king. When Sage Udanka came to him and requested his wife's earrings, he told Udanka to ask his wife for them. After he received the earrings, he was requested to accept the king's hospitality and have dinner. Udanka found a hair in his food. Angry with the king for having uninspected food served to a Brahmin, he gave the king a Ṣāpa* that he will become blind. Upset that Udanka had given him such a severe Ṣāpa for a small fault, the king countered with his own Ṣāpa that Udanka will not have any children. When Udanka begged the king to withdraw his Ṣāpa, the king told him that he, a Kshatriya, does not have the power of withdrawing a Ṣāpa, unlike Brahmins, who do have such power. He then requested the Sage to provide a means for release from the Ṣāpa he had received. Udanka allowed that the Ṣāpa's effect will be short-lived. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Phēnapa** – A Brahmin of the Bhārgava lineage. His given name was Sumitra. He was a cowherd who, after the calves drank milk from the cows, would lick the Phēna (*foam*) from the cows' udders. He thereby came to be known as Phēnapa. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pināka** – Lord Ṣiva's bow. Once upon a time, as Sage Kaṇva was performing Tapas*, mud hills covered him, and a huge bamboo tree grew from the mud. Lord Brahma fashioned the bamboo into three bows and gave one to Ṣiva, one to Vishṇu and kept one for Himself. The bow given to Ṣiva was named Pināka (*one of Ṣiva's names is Pināka Pāṇi, meaning 'He who holds the Pināka in his hand'*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Piṇḍāraka** – A Tīrtha*. It was after visiting this Tīrtha that Sages

led by Viṣvāmitra, on their way to visit Lord Kṛshṇa, gave the Yadu (*cowherd*) boys a Ṣāpa* because of a stupid practical joke the boys played on them. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pingāksha I** – A (*articulate*) bird. One of the Dharma Birds. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Pingāksha II** – A hunter. Even though born in a hunter tribe, he never hurt any living thing. He followed Dharma (*righteous path*) and was devoted to God. His paternal uncle, Dāraka, was a highway robber. One day, Pingāksha heard the plaintive cries of travellers who were being robbed by his uncle. He went to the aid of the victims and battled his uncle and the robbers in his gang. The robbers hit Pingāksha with arrows and killed him. Because he died while trying to protect others, he went to Puṇya* Lōka (*Lōka is Sanskrit for world*). He became Nirruti, one of the Dikpālakas* in a later life. (*Kāṣi Khanḍa is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'*.*) *Kāṣi Khanḍa*

**Pingaḷa I** – Son of Kadruva. A Nāga*. *Bhāgavata*

**Pingaḷa II** – A prostitute in the city of Mithila. Greedy for wealth, she deceived her life partner and started sleeping with people who offered her much money. After some time, tired of being a lady of the night, she decided that meditating on Lord Vishṇu with discipline would lead to Mukti*. She gave up her sexworker business, considering that the body is ephemeral like a lightning stroke, and keeping the Supreme Being in her heart, attained Mukti. *Bhāgavata*

**Pingaḷa III** – A prostitute. After waiting interminably for an assignation with her lover, she thought "Why am I crazy for this man? I will accept whoever comes to me as my lover. I will not

pine for one who does not come to me." This calmed her and she got rid of her anxiety. Desire is what makes one unhappy. A friend told this story to Sēnājit who was grieving the loss of loved ones. He was relieved of his sorrow on hearing it. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pinjaraka** – Son of Kadruva. A Nāga*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pippala I** – (*another name of Pippalāda*) A Sage. Several Sages came to him to learn Brahma* Gjnāna (*the nature of the Supreme Being*): Sukēṣa of Gōtra (*lineage*) of Bhāradwāja; Satyakāma, son of Ṣibi; Gārgya, son of Saurya; Kauṣalya, son of Aṣvala; Vaidarbhi, son of Bhṛgu; and Kabandhi, son of Katya.

Pippala told them "Stay in my Āṣram for one year performing Vratas* and practicing vows of celibacy. After that, I will answer your Praṣnas (*questions*)." They did so, asked their questions and learned the answers. *Praṣna Upanishad*

**Pippala II** – An Asura* who lived on the banks of the Gautami river. He and another Asura, Aṣvattha, were going about, eating Brahmins. The Brahmins in the area, afraid for their lives, prayed to the God Ṣani (*Saturn*). Ṣani said he would not do anything else until he finishes his Tapas*. The Brahmins said they would give him the benefit of all their Tapas. Receiving the full benefit of their Tapas, Ṣani went to Pippala as a disciple and killed him. *Brahma Purāṇa*

**Pippalāda** – Son of Sage Dadhīchi. His mother was Lōpāmudra (*different from the wife of Sage Agastya, she was known also as Suvarcha. In this and the following story of Pippalāda, the name Suvarcha will be used to avoid confusion*). He was born after the death of his father. His mother gave birth to him under a sacred fig

tree (*Pippala, commonly called Peepal*), and immolated herself in order to join her dead husband in the afterlife. The Pippala trees took pity on the baby, brought Amṛtam* by requesting Chandra (*the Moon God*) and raised him on it. He came to be known as Pippalāda due to these connections with Pippala trees. *Padma Purāṇa*

Once, to help them in a war on Asuras*, the Dēvas asked Dadhīchi for his bones with which to fashion great weapons. Dadhīchi asked his wife to go inside the house, ended his life and let the Dēvas take his bones. Suvarcha came out of the house and seeing her dead husband, cried, and gave the Dēvas a Ṣāpa* that they would turn into beasts. When she was about to immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre, she heard Ākāṣavāṇi* proclaim "Do not enter the funeral pyre. There is a male child in your womb." As she ignored the voice and prepared to enter the funeral pyre, an infant boy slipped out of her womb. That infant was Pippalāda. When Pippalāda grew up and learned that the Dēvas had caused his father's death, he set out to kill them and consulted Chandra. Chandra advised him to go to the banks of the Gōdāvari river and sing hymns to Lord Ṣiva. When Pippalāda did so, Ṣiva appeared to him and sent a female Asura, Kṛtya, per Pippalāda's request. Pippalāda directed her to go and kill the Dēvas. The Dēvas, terrified by the threat to them, ran to Ṣiva and prayed to Him. Ṣiva told Kṛtya to take the form of a mare and to stay in the Ganga river. He then came to Pippalāda and said "Why do you want to kill the Dēvas? Your father will not come back to life even if they die. Stop this effort." Pippalāda said "I cannot stop Kṛtya now. If she could be stopped I will give up my plan. Please

give me a boon by which I can visit my father and mother in Pitṛ Lōka (*world in which the souls of dead ancestors reside*)." The Dēvas prayed to Kṛtya herself. She told them she will live in the form of a mare in the Ganga river as per Ṣiva's instructions. They put her in a golden vessel and took her to Ganga. Unable to bear the burden of Kṛtya by herself (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*), Ganga shared her with the Yamuna and Sarasvati rivers. The three of them took her to the ocean.

Once, a young woman named Padma, daughter of King Anaraṇya came to Pippalāda's Āṣram. Falling in love with her at first sight, Pippalāda requested Anaraṇya for her hand and married Padma. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Pippalāyana** – Disciple of Vēdadarṣa. He learned the Atharva Vēda. *Bhāgavata*

**Pīṭha** – Commander of the forces of the Asura* Naraka. He fought against Lord Kṛshṇa when He came to kill Naraka and was killed by Him. *Bhāgavata*

**Pīvari I** – Daughter of Vibhrājas, a group of Dēvas. She performed Tapas* wishing for a strong, powerful husband. The Dēvas told her Sage Ṣuka will be her husband. Ṣuka married her. Sons named Kṛsha, Gaura, Prabhu, Bhūri, and Dēvaṣrava and daughters named Kīrti and Kṛti were born to Ṣuka and Pīvari. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Pīvari II** – Wife of Vēdaṣira. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Prabhākara I** – Sūrya (*the Sun God*). At the time the Dēvas and Asuras* were churning the Kshīrasāgara (*ocean of milk*), Rāhu hit

him (*in retaliation for his alerting Jaganmōhini that an Asura was receiving Amṛtam**), resulting in Sūrya being thrown from the sky to the ground. Sage Atri restored him to his position in the sky. Sūrya married the ten daughters of Raudrāṣya. Svasti and Ātrēya were his sons. *Hari Vamṣa*

**Prabhākara II** – Son of Kadruva. A Nāga*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Prabhākara III** – Ancestor of King Chitravāhana of the city of Maṇipura. He performed Tapas* directed towards Lord Brahma. Brahma appeared to him and gave him a boon that he and each of his descendants will have only one son. Accordingly, he had one son, and his son had one son. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Prabhāsa I** – A sacred place of pilgrimage. It is at the confluence of the Sarasvati river with the ocean. When Chandra (*the Moon God*) did not treat Aṣvini and his other Tāra (*star*) wives well (*he was extremely partial to one of the twenty seven daughters of Daksha whom he had married*), Daksha gave him a Ṣāpa* that he would suffer a consumptive disease. As Chandra was being diminished, so were the medicinal herbs. The Dēvas were thereby being starved of the herbs they needed. Realizing that their well-being was being impacted by the Ṣāpa on Chandra, they sought relief for Chandra from Daksha. Daksha modified the Ṣāpa in that if Chandra bathed in the Sarasvati river at its confluence with the ocean each New Moon day, he will flourish again. The Tīrtha (*holy place of pilgrimage*) where Chandra bathed according to this proviso is known as Prabhāsa Tīrtha*. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Prabhāsa II** – Son of Prabhāta and her husband Prajāpati. He married Yōgasiddhi, daughter of Angirasa. Viṣvakarma* was their

son. Prabhāsa was the youngest of the eight Vasus. Once, all the Vasus and their wives went to the Āṣram of Sage Vasishṭha. It was known that anyone who drank the milk of Vasishṭha's sacred cow will not get old or die. Prabhāsa's wife wanted the cow so that her female companion can benefit from her milk, so the Vasus stole the cow. Vasishṭha gave the Vasus a Ṣāpa* that they would be born to mortal, human women and since Prabhāsa was the most guilty of the eight Vasus, his Ṣāpa would make him live a long, childless life as a human. He was born as Bhīshma. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Prabhāta** – Wife of Prajāpati, Dēva's son. Pratyūsha and Prabhāsa were their sons. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Prabhāvanta** – Son of Pradyumna (*son of Lord Kṛshṇ*a) and Prabhāvati. After the Asura* Vajranābha (*Prabhāvati's father*) was killed, he was made king of Vajranābha's city. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Prabhāvati I** – Daughter of Sage Bharadvāja. She was performing intense Tapas* for the purpose of obtaining Indra* as her husband. Indra appeared to her, disguised as Sage Vasishṭha and asked her to marry him. Assuming it was Vasishṭha who came, she told him that she wanted to marry only Indra, but she offered to do anything the Sage wanted her to do. The fake Vasishṭha gave her some Badari (*Jujube*) fruit and asked her to cook them for him. She lit a fire and started to cook the fruits he gave her. All the wood she had put in the fire was consumed but the fruits did not even begin to be cooked. She considered going and fetching more firewood, but decided that the fire would likely go out before she could come back with more wood, and that if the fire went out, the fruits would spoil. So, she continued to cook the fruits, inserting

her feet and legs in the fire as fuel. Indra appreciated her devotion, revealed himself and took her to Swarga (*the heavenly abode of Indra and the Devas*). The site where she tried to cook the Badari fruits became a Tīrtha* named 'Badaripāda' (*Pāda is Sanskrit for foot*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Prabhāvati II** – Wife of King Yauvanāṣva, of the city of Bhadrāvati. Her husband captured the sacrificial horse from Dharmarāja's Aṣvamēdha Yāga*. Bhīma, along with Vṛshakētu (*son of karṇa*) and other warriors fought against him and his son. Bhīma, even though capable of killing them easily, spared their lives. Learning of this kind gesture by Bhīma and grateful to him, Prabhāvati treated Bhīma and his allies with respect and gave them gifts of diamonds. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Prabhāvati III** – Daughter of the Asura* Vajranābha. She had a female companion named Rāgavallari. At the behest of Indra*, a female (*articulate*) swan named Ṣuchimukhi entered the garden of Prabhāvati, and lavishly praising the good looks of Pradyumna (*son of Lord Kṛshṇa*), she inspired Prabhāvati to fall in love with him. Prabhāvati requested the swan to somehow bring Pradyumna to her. Ṣuchimukhi took Pradyumna to Vajranābha's Sabha (*court*) disguised as an actor named Bhadra. During the performance of the drama, he conveyed a message in code to Prabhāvati that they will have a tryst that night. Pradyumna took the form of a bee and hid in some flowers being presented to Prabhāvati, and once in her Antahpura*, assumed his own form. He and Prabhāvati got married secretly, in her Antahpura. Prabhāvati and Pradyumna had a son Prabhāvanta. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Prachētasa I** – Son of Lord Brahma. Gautama was his mind-born son. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Prachētasa II** – Father of Sage Vālmīki. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Prachētasas** – Sons of Prāchīnabarhi and his wife Samudri (*also known as Sauvarṇa*). These eleven brothers went only by the name Prachētasas. They, with their father's approval, performed Tapas* in the middle of the ocean. Lord Ṣiva appeared to them and asked them to choose a boon. The Prachētasas wished for the status of Prajāpati*. Ṣiva told them "You will have a son named Daksha who will be a Prajāpati. They stopped their Tapas and were returning home. At the time, the world was completely covered by trees. The Prachētasas started to cut down the trees. Chandra (*the Moon God*) then came to them and said "Please stop destroying trees. There is a daughter of trees named Mārisha. I will give her to you. Marry her." All eleven Prachētasas married her and had a son, Daksha, by her. *Vishṇu Purāṇa; Matsya Purāṇa*

**Prāchīnabarhi** – Son of Havirdhāna and husband of Samudri. Their sons were the Prachētasas. *Matsya Purāṇa; Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Prāchīnaṣāla** – Son of Upamanyu. He and Satyayagjna, even though they had studied the Vēdas thoroughly, could not comprehend the nature of the Supreme Being, Brahma*. They were going to Uddālaka's Āṣram, hoping that he could enlighten them. Uddālaka saw them coming from a distance and knew their purpose in coming to him. As soon as they arrived, he told them that he could not teach them what they were seeking. He also told them that King Aṣvapati of Kēkaya is knowledgable in the matter and he would accompany them to go and learn it from the king.

When they met the king, he offered them enormous wealth. They told him they did not seek wealth but rather to learn the nature of Brahma. He taught them what they were seeking. *Chāndōgya Upanishad*

**Prāchīṣa** – Son of Purūrava's son Janamējaya (*different from Arjuna's great-grandson*). He conducted a triumphant victory tour upto the Udaya mountain. His wife was Aṣmaki. Their son was Samyāti. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pradhnaṣva** – A king. When Sage Agastya needed money, he came to this king along with Ṣrutaparva. Because he also had no money, he joined them and all three then went to King Trasadasya. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pradvēshiṇi** – A woman. She married Dīrghatama in spite of his blindness because he was a scholar. She had children by him, but was always angry with him. Fed up with her attitude, he asked her one day, "Why are you always angry with me, even though you are my wife and the mother of my children?" She angrily replied, "You are my husband (*Bharta, meaning one who takes care of his wife, Bhārya, meaning one who is taken care of*) and I am your wife but yet, I have had to take care of you and I am tired of you. Go away!" Furious on hearing his wife's intemperate words, Dīrghatama gave women a Ṣāpa* that a woman without a husband shall not be allowed to wear ornaments, especially the Māngalya (*the sacred necklace tied by the husband around a woman's neck during the wedding ceremony*). As the quarrel escalated, Pradvēshiṇi asked her sons to take their father somewhere and dump him. They took their blind father away and dropped him in

the river Ganga. *Bhāgavata*

**Pradyōtana** – Son of Ṣaunaka, minister of King Puranjaya (*whom the minister killed and took over the kingdom*). He succeeded his father as king. His son was Nandivardhana. *Bhāgavata*

**Pradyumna** – Son of Lord Kṛshṇa and His Consort Rukmiṇi, with aspects of Sage Sanatkumāra.

After Lord Ṣiva opened His third eye and reduced Manmatha to ashes, his wife Ratī Dēvi was devastated with grief. Sage Nārada went to her and informed her that Manmatha will take birth as Pradyumna and that the Asura* Ṣambara would try to kill him. To prepare for any eventuality, Ratī Dēvi took the form of a human female, Māyāvati, and joined the household of Ṣambara as a servant.

At the moment of Pradyumna's birth, Ākāṣavāṇi* announced that the Asura Ṣambara will die at his hands. Hearing these words and in fear of his life, Ṣambara took the form of a crow and on the eighth day after Pradyumna's birth, abducted the infant and threw him in the ocean. A giant fish swallowed him whole. The fisherman who caught the fish, considering how big the fish was, took it to the house of Ṣambara and handed it to Māyāvati who was in the kitchen.

When Māyāvati cut open the fish, she saw a baby boy inside. Sage Nārada came and revealed to her that the infant is none other than Pradyumna. Māyāvati secretly raised the infant she removed from the stomach of the fish. As he matured, he found Māyāvati's behaviour toward him, as if she was his wife, incongruous (*having assumed that she was his mother*) and questioned her about it. She revealed to him everything that happened since he, as Manmatha,

was burnt by Ṣiva's third eye, including the fact that Ṣambara would try to kill him if the Asura discovered his true identity. Pradyumna, learning a Mantra named "Sarva Ṣatru Māyā Vināṣini" (*Sanskrit for 'destroyer of any enemy's evil magic'*), killed Ṣambara. Māyāvati married Pradyumna. She then flew along with him to Dwāraka. Rukmiṇi, on seeing him, felt a surge of maternal feelings and wondered if he might be her long-lost son. Sage Nārada, as usual, showed up and confirmed her suspicion. Pradyumna, in a Swayamvara*, married Rukmavati the beautiful daughter of Rukmi (*his maternal uncle*). He and Rukmavati had a son, Aniruddha. *Bhāgavata*

Once, having heard that Kṛshṇa was away from Dwāraka, King Sālva mounted an attack against the city. Pradyumna fought against him. He was knocked unconscious by arrows launched by Sālva. His chariot-driver took him away from the battlefield. When Pradyumna was about to return to the fight after regaining consciousness, Nārada came and informed him that Sālva cannot be killed by him and that Kṛshṇa Himself will kill him. Pradyumna abandoned the fight. *Mahā Bhārata*

A (*articulate*) female Swan named Ṣuchimukhi once told Pradyumna that Kṛshṇa and Indra* were planning to kill the Asura Vajranābha and that he needs to perform one action towards their goal. She then extolled the beauty of Vajranābha's daughter Prabhāvati. At first, Pradyumna did not pay particular attention to her words, but he kept thinking of Prabhāvati with some fondness. After a while, he realized that he is in love with Prabhāvati and pining for her, he sent a parrot to deliver a letter to Ṣuchimukhi. Ṣuchimukhi took Pradyumna to Vajranābha's Sabha (*court*)

disguised as an actor named Bhadra. During the performance of the drama, he conveyed a message in code to Prabhāvati that they will have a tryst that night. Pradyumna took the form of a bee and hid in some flowers being presented to Prabhāvati and once in her Antahpura*, assumed his own form. He and Prabhāvati got married secretly, in her Antahpura. Two other sons of Kṛshṇa, Gada and Sāmba, who had accompanied Pradyumna as part of the drama troupe, fell in love with Chandrāvati and Guṇavati, daughters of Vajranābha's brother, Sunābha. Pradyumna created tunnels leading from the Antahpura of Prabhāvati to those of her cousins. The three sons of Kṛshṇa were enjoying sex with their wives. Prabhāvati and Pradyumna had a son Prabhāvanta. About this time, Vajranābha discovered that uninvited guests had been staying in the Antahpuras of his daughter and nieces. He sent soldiers to arrest the intruders. Pradyumna fought Vajranābha's soldiers. Indra and other Dēvas sent forces to assist Pradyumna. Pradyumna killed Vajranābha and returned to Dwāraka with Prabhāvati. Gada and Sāmba brought their wives Chandrāvati and Guṇavati back as well. Pradyumna's son Prabhāvanta was crowned ruler of the city of Vajranābha. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Prāgdamṣa** – An Asura*. Once, when he abducted the wife of Sage Bhṛgu, the Sage gave him a Ṣāpa* that he would become an insect. When the Asura begged him for the means of release from the Ṣāpa, the Sage said that he will be released when he sees the face of Paraṣurāma. Prāgdamṣa became an insect named Alarka. When Paraṣurāma was sleeping with his head on the thigh of Karṇa, this insect bit Karṇa, who started to bleed. Paraṣurāma woke up when the blood touched his head. The insect then saw

Paraṣurāma's face, was released from the Ṣāpa and regained his form. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Praghana** – Son of Sumāli. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Prāgjyōtisha** – The city of the Asura* King Bhagadatta (*son of Naraka*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Prahasta** – Son of Sumāli. One of the commanders of Rāvaṇa's armed forces. When Rāvaṇa went to war against Kubēra (*the God of Wealth, Rāvaṇa's half-brother*), he fought and defeated Kubēra's general Māṇibhadra. He counseled Rāvaṇa to devise a strategic plan before going to war against Rāma. His son was Jambumāli. In the Rāmāyaṇa war, Prahasta was killed by Nīla, a Vānara*. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Prahēti** – Son of Swāyambhu Manu*. Brother of Hēti. The two brothers defeated Indra* and the Dēvas. When Indra begged Lord Vishṇu for help, He came and defeated the brothers. Mitrakēṣi was Prahēti's daughter. Learning that his daughter loved King Durjaya, he gave her in marriage to the king. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Prahlāda** – Son of the Asura* Hiraṇyakaṣipu. His mother was Līlāvati. Once, when Hiraṇyakaṣipu was away performing Tapas*, the Dēvas declared war on the Asuras. The Asuras were defeated and retreated. Indra* captured Hiraṇyakaṣipu's wife Līlāvati. At the time, she was pregnant with Prahlāda. Sage Nārada went to Indra and argued that Līlāvati was a good person and that Indra should release her. Indra said "There is a boy in her womb. I will release her after I kill him." Nārada revealed to Indra that the baby she was carrying will be a devotee of Lord Vishṇu, persuaded him to release Līlāvati and took her to his Āṣram. Nārada protected her

through her pregnancy and taught her the true nature of the world. The fetus in her womb also absorbed the knowledge imparted by the Sage. As a result, Prahlāda became a devotee of Vishṇu from the time he was born. There was no one more virtuous than him. Hiraṇyakaṣipu had Prahlāda educated by the sons of Ṣukra (*Guru of the Asuras*) Chanḍa, Amarka, Twāshṭra, and Dharātra. Prahlāda learnt everything very fast and started teaching his classmates Vēdānta and devotion to Vishṇu. When Hiraṇyakaṣipu, trying to learn how far his son's education had progressed, sat him down on his lap and asked him to recite a poem, Prahlāda sang the praises of Vishṇu. Hiraṇyakaṣipu lectured Prahlāda, saying "Vishṇu is our enemy and a thief. I am the Lord of the three worlds (*Swarga or heaven, earth, and Pātāḷa or netherworld*). No one should praise Vishṇu." Prahlāda insisted that no one who was not a devotee of Vishṇu could achieve Mukti*. However much Hiraṇyakaṣipu and the Gurus tried to turn him away from worship of Vishṇu, Prahlāda continued to sing the praises of Vishṇu. Finally, Hiraṇyakaṣipu became angry enough with Prahlāda for rejecting his Asura heritage that he ordered his son put to death. He had the boy thrown down from mountain cliffs; he had him bitten by serpents; he had him crushed by elephants. Through all this mayhem, Prahlāda was not hurt in the least and would not beg for the punishments to stop. He kept singing prayers to Vishṇu. Totally frustrated, Hiraṇyakaṣipu asked him " Where is your Vishṇu?" Prahlāda replied that Vishṇu was everywhere and in every object. Saying "Show him in this pillar", Hiraṇyakaṣipu kicked a pillar hard enough that it broke into pieces. Vishṇu, in the form of Narasimha (*Sanskrit for man-lion*), emerged from the pillar and

tore Hiraṇyakaṣipu to pieces and killed him, while complying with all the restrictions due to the boons the Asura had received. Brahma and the Dēvas came and prayed to Narasimha. *Bhāgavata*

Prahlāda's wife was named Dēvi. Āyushmanta, Ṣibi, Virōchana, Kumbha and Nikumbha were their sons. Once, Prahlāda insulted a Muni. By the Muni's Ṣāpa*, he lost his devotion to Vishṇu. Subsequently, a battle occurred between him and Vishṇu. Prahlāda regained his senses and became a Vishṇu devotee again.

Once, Sage Chyavana was abducted while he was bathing in a river and taken to Pātāḷa. Prahlāda, who happened to be there, saw him and honoured him. Hearing of the holy pilgrimages Chyavana had undertaken, Prahlāda liked the thought of visiting such places and accompanied him along with his retinue on pilgrimage. During his pilgrimage, Prahlāda was passing by the place where Nara and Nārāyaṇa were performing Tapas and noticed that there were weapons by their side. He said "Why do Munis have weapons by their side? These must be fake Munis." His words angered Nara and Nārāyaṇa. They had a fierce argument with Prahlāda, which eventually led to a fight. However hard he fought, Prahlāda was unable to defeat Nara and Nārāyaṇa (*which he expected to do because he was a king in his prime and they looked like a pair of Munis*). He then prayed to Lord Vishṇu, who appeared and explained to him that Nara and Nārāyaṇa were his aspects and were invincible to anyone. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

Prahlāda, like most Asuras, felt the desire to conquer and rule Swarga (*heaven*). He battled the Dēvas but was defeated and giving the kingdom to his grandson Bali, went away to perform Tapas. Once, Prahlāda's son Virōchana and a Brahmin named

Sudhanva, both wishing for the hand of the same woman in marriage, each argued that he was better qualified than the other in every way. They went to Prahlāda and asked him to judge who was the better qualified man for the woman they both wanted to marry. Sudhanva warned Prahlāda that if he gave an unjust verdict, his head would explode. Afraid that he might do wrong, Prahlāda went to Sage Kaṣyapa and asked him what he should do in this situation. Kaṣyapa advised him that witnesses and judges should not forsake their duty and that it would be a sin even to refuse to render a verdict. Prahlāda reviewed their qualities and qualifications and ruled that Sudhanva (*and not his own son*) was the better man. *Mahā Bhārata*

Virōchana's son Bali, while ruling as the emperor of the Asuras, asked Prahlāda (*his grandfather*) why the power of Asuras had declined significantly. Prahlāda told him that the decline was due to the power of Lord Vishṇu. Bali replied "What is the greatness of Vishṇu? Are there not many warriors on our side who could defeat him?" These words angered Prahlāda (*who was a great devotee of Vishṇu*) so much that he gave Bali a Ṣāpa that he would be pushed down (*to the netherworld Pātāḷa*) by Vishṇu's foot. Prahlāda used to teach Bali to follow Dharma (*the righteous path*). So, when Vāmana (*Lord Vishṇu's fifth incarnation and His first fully human one*) was stepping on Bali, Prahlāda came and assured Vishṇu that Bali was a good man and did not deserve to be killed. Vishṇu spared Bali's life because of Prahlāda's request. *Vāmana Purāṇa*

**Prahlādi** – Wife of Viṣvakarma*. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*

**Praja** – Son of Aniruddha (*Lord Kṛshṇa's grandson*). *Bhāgavata*

**Prajāgara** – Commander of the forces of the city of King Puranjana. When a Gandharva* king, Chanḍavēga attacked the city, he defeated the Gandharva. *Bhāgavata*

**Prajāpāla** – Son of Ṣrutakīrti. Once, he went to the forest and requested a Muni named Mahātapa to teach him the path to Mukti*. In his previous life he was a Muni named Suprabha. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Prajāpati** – Son of Manu* named Dēva. He had seven wives: Dhūmra, Brahmavidya, Manasvini, Rati, Ṣvasa, Ṣānḍili, and Prabhāta. He had eight sons by them: Dhara, Dhruva, Sōma, Ahu, Anila, Agni, Pratyūsha, and Prabhāsa. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Prajvāra** – Younger brother of a foreign king named Bhaya. He accompanied Bhaya and Kālaputri when they attacked and burned down the city of Puranjana. *Bhāgavata*

**Pralamba** – An Asura*. At the time when Lord Kṛshṇa and His older brother Balarāma were children playing childish games, this Asura took the form of a cowherd boy and joined in the play, intending to kill them. As he grabbed Balarāma and flew up to the sky, Balarāma increased his weight, pushed Pralamba down, smashed his head and killed him. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Pramadōttama** – A princess who ruled a city with golden towers and nine gates, on the slopes of the Himālaya mountains. *Bhāgavata*

**Pramadvara** – Daughter of the Apsara* Mēnaka and the Gandharva* King Viṣvāvasu. Abandoned by her parents, she grew up in the Āṣram of a Muni named Sthūlakēṣa. Ruru (*grandson of*

*Sage Chyavana*) fell in love with her and wanted to marry her. One day, while she was playing with other girls, a snake bit her and she fell to the ground, dead. Sages including Maitrēya carried her body to Sthūlakēṣa's Asram. She was brought back to life by Ruru (*who was desperately in love with her and devastated by her premature death*) giving up one half of his life expectancy. Pramadvara and Ruru got married and lived happily. *Mahā Bhārata; Dēvi Bhāgavata*

**Pramati I** – Son of Sage Chyavana and his wife Sukanya. He and the Apsara* Ghṛtāchi had a son Ruru. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pramati II** – A Muni. Once, a man named Nala (*different from the king and husband of Damayanti*) went to the forest with his friend King Sudēva, and while there, fell in love with the wife of Pramati. The Muni, enraged by his behaviour, asked Sudēva to punish Nala. Sudēva lied, saying he cannot punish Nala because he is a Vaiṣya (*merchant caste, third in the hierarchy below Brahmin and Kshatriya, the warrior caste*) and not a king. The Muni then gave Nala a Ṣāpa* that he would turn into water. He also gave a Ṣāpa to Sudēva that he would be born as a Vaiṣya. Sudēva prostrated himself at the feet of Pramati, begging his forgiveness. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Pramati III** – Son of Prāmṣu and father of Khamitra. *Bhāgavata*

**Pramīla** – A princess in a land populated exclusively by women (*a la Amazons*). Women ruled the country and fought wars. No army could defeat them. If any of them had a child, it would be female. No male children would be born to them. Pramīla was the queen of this land. The sacrificial horse from Dharmarāja's Aṣvamēdha

Yāga* was captured in their city. Arjuna was about to fight her to recover the horse. He was advised that he could not defeat her, and that a better option for getting the horse released was to marry Pramīla. Arjuna accordingly married her (*each of the Pānḍavas had at least one other wife for himself alone, in addition to Draupadi, whom they all shared*). *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Pramlōchana** – An Apsara*. Indra*, as he usually did, sent her to disturb the Tapas* of a Muni named Kantha. Pramlōchana came to the Muni, seduced him and diverted him from Tapas. He spent several years enjoying sexual pleasures with her. After a while, he realized his loss of purpose in life and became angry with Pramlōchana. She was in the early stages of pregnancy at the time and his angry words frightened her. Kantha's semen came out to her skin as sweat. She wiped it with tender shoots from a tree. She then left Kantha and went away. The semen wiped with the shoots became a girl named Mārisha. (see **Prachētasas**) *Vishṇu Purāṇa; Matsya Purāṇa*

**Pramōchana** – An Apsara*. She and Pushkara, a son of Varuṇa (*the God of Rain*) had a daughter, Mālini. She gave her daughter in marriage to a king named Ruchi. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Prāmṣu** – Son of Vatsaprīti and father of Pramati. *Bhāgavata*

**Pramucha** – A Muni. Sage Ṛtumanta had given the Nakshatra (*star*) Rēvati a Ṣāpa* that she would fall to earth. Rēvati fell on a mountain named Kumudagiri. Pramucha found her and raised her as part of his family. When she was of marriageable age, he gave her in marriage to a king named Durdama. Rēvati had requested that her marriage be performed when the star Rēvati was

ascendant. When he pointed out that he could not fulfill her wish because the star had fallen, Rēvati suggested that he use his spiritual power obtained by Tapas* to reinstate her in the heavens. Using his spiritual power as she suggested, the Muni re-instated Rēvati in the sky. He then performed Rēvati's marriage with Durdama. He offered Durdama a dowry and asked him to choose something extremely difficult to obtain. Durdama wished that a son born to him should become a Manu*. Pramucha gave him the boon and Raivata was born to Rēvati and Durdama. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Prāṇa I** – Son of a Vasu named Sōma. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Prāṇa II** – Son of Dhāta and brother of Mṛkanḍu. His wife was Puṇḍarīka, daughter of Sage Vasishṭha,. Their son was Dyutimanta. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Prāpti I** – Daughter of the Asura* Jarāsandha and wife of Kamsa (*Lord Kṛshṇa's evil uncle*). *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Prāpti II** – Wife of Ṣama. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Prasanna I** – Son of Matanga. Husband of Dharmavyādha's daughter Arjuniki. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Prasanna II** – One of the Nārī Tīrthas*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Prasēna** – Brother of Satrājit. He was given the special diamond, Ṣyamantaka, by his brother who had denied Lord Kṛshṇa's request that the diamond be given to Him. One day, Prasēna was travelling in the forest wearing the diamond. A lion (*which in turn, was killed by Jāmbavanta*) killed him and took the diamond. Kṛshṇa was falsely accused of killing Prasēna for the diamond. *Bhāgavata*

**Prasēnajit I** – Father of Rēṇuka. Father-in-law of Sage Jamadagni. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Prasēnajit II** – (*Also known as Sēnājit*) Son of Kṛtāṣva and father of Yuvanāṣva. *Bhāgavata*

**Prasravaṇa** – A mountain near the country of Kishkindha. Lord Rāma amd Lakshmaṇa took refuge in a cave of this mountain during the rainy season (*while waiting for the Vānara* King Sugrīva to act on his promise to help find Sīta*). *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Praṣuṣukra** – Son of Marut and father of Sandhi. *Bhāgavata*

**Prasūti** – Daughter of Swāyambhu Manu* and wife of Daksha Prajāpati*. *Bhāgavata*

**Pratardhana I** – (*also known as Pravardhana*) Son born to King Divōdās of the city of Kāṣi* when he performed a Putra Kāmēshṭi Yāga*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pratardhana II** – A king. Father of Vatsa. *Bhāgavata*

**Pratibāhu** – Grandson of Aniruddha (*Lord Kṛshṇa's grandson*). Son of Praja and father of Subāhu. *Bhāgavata*

**Pratīha** – Son of Paramēshṭhi and his wife Suvarchala. He was spreading Brahma* Gjnāna (*knowledge of the Supreme Being*) among all people. He had sons named Pratiharta, Prastōta, and Udgāta, all of whom were well-versed in the performance of Yāgas. *Bhāgavata*

**Prātikāmi** – A servant of Duryōdhana. He was sent to bring Draupadi to the Sabha (*court*) after Dharmarāja lost in the games of chance. She gave him a question and sent him back to get the

answer to it. He read Draupadi's question to those present in the Sabha but no one gave him an answer. He was also sent to Dharmarāja to convey the invitation to the second games of chance. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pratīpa** – Son of Ṛksha's son Bhīmasēna. His wife was Sunanda. They went on a pilgrimage with the objective of begetting children. They had sons named Ṣantanu, Dēvāpi, and Bāhlika. When Pratīpa was performing Tapas* on the banks of the Ganga river (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*), Ganga fell in love with him, took the form of a human female, sat on his right thigh and begged him to accept her as his wife. He told her "I am bound by a vow of monogamy but also, because you sat on my right thigh, which is the place reserved for a son to sit, become my son's wife."

As he was leaving for the Tapōvana* after installing Ṣantanu as his successor on the throne, he told his son about the young woman he saw on the banks of Ganga whom he had asked to become his son's wife. He added "She agreed. Do as she asks without enquiring about her name, caste or her parents." *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pratishṭhāna Pura** – A city to the north of the confluence of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers. Sudyumna was the king of this city. He made his son Purūrava the king after him. *Bhāgavata*

**Pratismṛti** – A science. Sage Vyāsa taught it to Dharmarāja while the Pāṇḍavas were serving their exile in the forest. Dharmarāja in turn taught it to Arjuna. It was by the use of this knowledge that Arjuna was able to enhance the power of his Tapas* and able to

make Indra* and other Dēvas to appear to him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pratiṣravasa** – Son of Bhīmasēna (*not one of the Pānḍavas*) And father of Pratīpa. *Bhāgavata*

**Pratīta** – Son of Vasu and father of Ōghavanta. *Bhāgavata*

**Prativindya** – One of the Upapānḍavas (*sons of the Pānḍavas*). Son of Draupadi and Dharmarāja. He killed a king named Jittu in the Mahā Bhārata war. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pratyūsha** – One of the eight Vasus. Son of Prabhāta and her husband Prajāpati. Brother of Prabhāsa. Dēvala and Vibhu were his sons. *Mahā Bhārata; Bhāgavata*

**Pravāhaṇa** – Son of Jībala. A royal Sage. He, Ṣilaka, and Chaikitāyana knew the science of Udgītha (*pure form of Sāma Vēda, the science of music*) and often held discussions on it. One day, Chaikitāyana was answering Ṣilaka's questions, but at one point Ṣilaka said to him,"Your knowledge is incomplete. It is also contrary to the science of Sāma Gāna and the law. If someone whose knowledge of Udgītha is comprehensive gives you a Ṣāpa* that your head should be separated from your body, that will happen." Recognizing his shortcoming, Chaikitāyana became a disciple of Ṣilaka and learnt Udgītha from him. Later, Pravāhaṇa questioned Ṣilaka on the subject. At the end of the session, Pravāhaṇa made the same comment about Ṣilaka that Ṣilaka had earlier made about Chaikitāyana. Ṣilaka then requested Pravāhaṇa to teach him properly and became knowledgable.

Once, a Brahmin named Ṣvētakētu, arrogant because of his knowledge, came to Pravāhaṇa. Pravāhaṇa asked him if he knew how living beings are born and what happens to them at death.

Ṣvētakētu could not answer him. Pravāhaṇa asked "You did not know these things. How can you consider yourself educated?" and sent him packing. Ṣvētakētu's father then came to Pravāhaṇa to learn the things Pravāhaṇa had asked his son. Pravāhaṇa explained to him of the cycle of birth and death, that "Living things, after death, turn into clouds, water, and herbs. They are eaten by other living things and take birth again." *Chāndōgya Upanishad*

**Prāvārakarṇa** – An (*articulate*) owl. He was older than Mārkanḍēya. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pravarākhya** – A pious Brahmin and traditionalist in the city of Aruṇāspada. He welcomed guests and visitors to his house and yearned to hear stories of virtuous people. One day, when a Siddha (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers*) stopped by his house, he asked "What holy places have you visited, Sir?" The Siddha mentioned several such places. Pravarākhya wondered aloud how someone was able to visit so many places in a short time. The Siddha told him that he has a cream which, when applied to one's feet, has the power to take that person to any place of his choice, however far away, in an instant and gave some to Pravarākhya. Pravarākhya applied some of the cream to his feet and wished to go to the Himālaya mountain. In an instant, he was at the mountain. He saw the many wonders there. As the day went on and it got warm, the cream on his feet melted away. Pravarākhya could not find his way back home. Regretting his decision to come to the mountain, he was looking around to find a way back when he encountered a woman named Varūdhini. Gathering his courage, he asked her if she knew the way to his city. She scornfully replied "You have such big eyes, do you not know

how you got here? Why do you accost a woman who is alone with the pretext of being lost?" She then asked him to stay there and told him she is in love with him. When he did not respond favourably, she tried to kiss him on the lips. He somehow freed himself from her and 'thought of'* Agni (*the God of Fire*) with a request that if he, Pravarākhya, was a Dharmapara (*righteous person*), to get him home. Because he was a man of integrity, he found himself back in his house instantly. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Pravardhana** – (*Also known as Pratardhana*) Son of Mādhavi and King Divōdās. King Vītahavya, of the lineage of Hayahaya, drove Divōdās from his kingdom and killed Divōdās' father Sudēva. To avenge these atrocities, Pravardhana killed the sons of Vītahavya and went to kill Vītahavya too. Vītahavya hid in the Āṣram of Sage Bhṛgu. Pravardhana, pursuing him, went to the Āṣram and asked the Sage about Vītahavya. The Sage, who let Vītahavya hide in the Asram, lied and said "There is no king here, there are only Brahmins." Pravardhana laughed and said "This is enough. I succeeded in making my enemy forsake his heritage. Is that not shameful enough? Your statement is not false" and left. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pravarshaṇagiri** – A mountain (*Giri, Adri, Parvata etc. are Sanskrit words for 'mountain'*). When the Asura Jarāsandha attacked them and pursued them, Kṛshṇa and Balarāma hid on this mountain. Jarāsandha set fires all around the mountain. *Bhāgavata*

**Prayāga** – Lord Brahma performed many Yāgas at this city. It thereby came to be known as Prayāga. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Priya** – Daughter of Daksha Prajāpati*. Daksha gave her to Lord

Brahma in marriage. Nārada was born to her. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Priyamvada I** – Wife of Nahusha. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Priyamvada II** – A Gandharva*. When he insulted Sage Matanga, he received a Ṣāpa* that he would turn into a bull elephant. When he begged for a means of release from the Ṣāpa, the Muni told him "When King Aja (*son of Raghu, ancestor of Lord Rāma*) hits you on the globe on your forehead, you will regain your form." He became an elephant and was at a lake. As Aja was on his way to a Swayamvara*, his elephants, chased by this elephant, stampeded. Not wanting to kill the elephant, Aja hit the elephant's forehead with an arrow. Priyamvada, released from the Ṣāpa, regained his own form, greeted Aja with a Namaskāra*, and in gratitude, taught Aja the Sammōhanāstra (*a weapon that bewilders and incapacitates the victim*). *Raghu Vamṣa*

**Priyavrata** – Son of Swāyambhu Manu* and his wife Ananti. Brother of Uttānapāda. He married Kukshi, daughter of Kardama Prajāpati* and Barhishmati, daughter of Viṣvakarma*. His sons included Āgnīdhra, Mēdhātithi, Vapushmanta, Idhmajihva, Kavi, Vītihōtra, and Savana. By other wives, he had a daughter Ūrjasvati and sons Uttama, Tāmasa, and Raivata. Priyavrata did not accept his role as king. Lord Brahma came to him and convinced him that family life is not an obstacle to Mukti* for a self-realized individual. He then agreed to rule his kingdom.

As Sūrya (*the Sun God*) revolved around the Mēru mountain (*regarded as the tallest mountain, taller than the Himālaya, at the northern end of the then known world*), the world was plunged into darkness whenever Sūrya was behind the mountain. King

Priyavrata, hoping to light up the dark world, rode his chariot all over, while performing Tapas*. The areas in which he rode became the Sapta Samudras (*Sapta is Sanskrit for 'seven'; Samudra means 'ocean'*). The pieces of land in between became Sapta Dwīpas (*Dwīpa is Sanskrit for 'island'. In present context, continent*). *Bhāgavata*

**Pṛshadaṣva** – Son of Virūpa and father of Rathētara. *Bhāgavata*

**Pṛshaddhru** – Son of Vaivasvata Manu*. He used to guard the cows. One night, there was a huge rainstorm during which one of the cows cried out. Noticing that a tiger had entered the herd, he went out armed with a sword and hit what he thought was the tiger. In the morning, it became clear that he had hit and killed a cow instead of the tiger. Sage Vasishṭha, hearing about the death of a cow, gave Pṛshaddhru a Ṣāpa* that he would become a Ṣūdra*. Begging Vasishṭha for a means of release from the Ṣāpa, with the Sage's permission, he concentrated with devotion on Lord Vishṇu. He was thus able to overcome the desires of his senses, and attained peace of mind by not desiring anything. Wandering aimlessly in the forest, he was engulfed in a wildfire and achieved Mukti*. He came to be known as Karūsha. *Bhāgavata*

He once stole a cow from his Guru, Sage Chyavana. He received a Ṣāpa that he would become a Ṣūdra as a result. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Pṛshata** – Youngest son of Sujanmakṛt, king of the country of Pānchāla. A friend of Sage Bharadvāja. Once, Pṛshata, while performing Tapas*, saw the Apsara* Mēnaka (*not clear if she just happened to be visiting earth or was sent by Indra* to disrupt the Tapas, as he usually did*) gathering flowers nearby and

spontaneously ejaculated. Ashamed at his lack of self-control, he hid the semen under his foot. Drupada was born from the semen. Pṛshata left the baby in the Āṣram of Sage Bharadvāja and returned to the city. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pṛṣni** – Wife of a Prajāpati* named Sutapa in the Manvantara (*reign as Manu**) of Swāyambhu. She and her husband prayed to Lord Vishṇu for many years, and wished for and received a boon that He will be their son. They were Aditi and Kaṣyapa (*parents of Indra* and Vishṇu*) and later, Dēvaki and Vasudēva (*parents of Kṛshṇa*). *Bhāgavata*

**Pṛtha I** – Daughter of a Vasu named Sōma. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pṛtha II** – Given name of Kunti (*mother of the three eldest Pānḍavas*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pṛtha III** – Son of Anēnasa and father of Viṣvagandha. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pṛthu** – A king. He was born when the shoulders of Vēna were churned. Vēna was then killed and Pṛthu was crowned as king. Pṛthu married Archi, who had aspects of Goddess Lakshmi, and was also born while parts of Vēna's body were being churned. They had sons named Vijitāṣva, Dhūmrāṣva, Haryaṣva, Draviṇa, Vṛka, Antardhāna, and Havirdhāna. During Vēna's reign, due to his non-righteous conduct, there were no rains in the kingdom, and as a result, no crops. The people were suffering from starvation. Blaming the Goddess Earth for the lack of crops, and intending to help the people, Pṛthu was about to hit the earth, who had taken the form of a cow. Afraid of Pṛthu, the earth said "I gave up my form because the world has become a den of thieves due to

the absence of Yāgas and Dharma (*righteous action*). Create a calf and milk me." Pṛthu transformed Manu into a calf and milked all types of medicinal herbs from the earth. Then Yakshas, Siddhas, and Sādhyas (*semi-divine beings with a variety of special magical powers*), making calves of the appropriate character, milked the earth for their specific needs. Pṛthu flattened the mountains and leveled the earth.

Intending to perform one hundred horse-sacrifice Yāgas, Pṛthu started the Yāgas on the banks of the Sarasvati river in the country of Brahmāvarta and completed ninety nine of them. As he was about to complete the one hundredth, Indra* stole the Yāga horse, afraid of the consequences that would result if the Yāga was completed (*In this case, even though Pṛthu might have been performing the Yāgas to benefit his people and not with his eye on the position of Indra, the incumbent could not discount the possibility of being displaced*). Pṛthu's son defeated Indra and brought the horse back. Using trickery, Indra took the horse away again. Enraged, Pṛthu prepared to to take up arms and attack Indra. Some of the Munis officiating at the Yāga restrained him saying "The performer of the Yāga should not take up arms and interrupt the Yāga. We will invite Indra to the Yāga and throw him in the sacred fire." Pṛthu put down his bow and arrows and sat back in front of the Yāga fire.

Then, Lord Brahma came and said to those at the Yāga "Indra is one aspect of the Deity to whom your Yāga is directed. He is not someone you should kill. Pṛthu will be eligible to the benefits normally accruing from the performance of one hundred Yāgas. Pṛthu was born with aspects of Lord Vishṇu to reestablish Dharma

on earth." Pṛthu was relieved on hearing this, stopped the Yāga and became a good friend of Indra. Pṛthu ruled the earth righteously for many years, handed the kingdom over to his sons and went to Tapōvana*. *Bhāgavata*

**Pṛthūdaka** – A Tīrtha*. Sage Viṣvāmitra, after he was defeated by the holy cow of Sage Vasishṭha, performed Tapas* here. A Ṣūdra* who bathes here will become a Brahmin. A Brahmin who bathes here will attain Mukti*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pṛthuṣrava** – Son of King Raghu of the Sūrya (*solar; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Chandra, or lunar; ancestor of Lord Rāma*) dynasty. His son was Aja. *Bhāgavata*

**Pṛthuṣravas** – Guardian of the city of Dwāraka. When Arjuna was taking Subhadra (*sister of Lord Kṛshṇa and Balarāma*) away, Pṛthuṣravas tried to stop him. Arjuna ignored him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pūjani** – A (*articulate*) bird. She was intelligent and skilled in conversation. She lived in the kingdom of Brahmadatta. She had a baby bird and would bring tasty fruit for him. She would give fruit to the king's son as well. The king's son and the baby bird used to play together. One day, while Pūjani was away, the boy killed the baby bird. Devastated by the death of her son, Pūjani scratched out the prince's eyes and blinded him. Flying away from Brahmadatta's city, she went up into the sky and said to the king "Your son got what he deserved for his criminal act.' The king said "I did not do anything wrong. I have no hard feelings for you. I regret that you are leaving." Saying "Once the friendship is broken, I cannot stay just because of your nice words. Sometimes, deadly fire hides in cold water", she flew away, unable to trust the king

anymore. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pulaha** – A mind-born son of Lord Brahma. He was born from Brahma's belly-button. Gati, Kardama Prajāpati*'s daughter was his wife. Karmaṣrēshṭa, Varīyāmsa, and Sahishṇu were their sons. Kinnaras (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers. They have horses' heads over human bodies*) and Kimpurushas (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers. They have human heads over horses' bodies*) were born to him. *Mahā Bhārata; Bhāgavata*

**Pulastya** – A mind-born son of Lord Brahma. Once, he was performing Tapas* on the slopes of the Mēru mountain near the Āṣram of Sage Tṛṇabindu. Some divine damsels were disturbing him with their song, dance and play nearby. He confronted them angrily and told them "Go away. If you do not leave, any of you who is in my line of sight will lose her virginity and become pregnant." The divine damsels all ran away, afraid of his wrath. But Tṛṇabindu's daughter stayed in the area. Pulastya looked at her. Unhappy at becoming suddenly pregnant due to no fault of hers, and afraid of how her father would react to her condition, she went back to her father's Āṣram. Seeing her crestfallen face and realizing by his Divya Dṛshṭi* that she was blameless, he consoled her. Afterwards, he took her to Pulastya's Āṣram and gave her to the Sage. Knowing that she was blameless, Pulastya accepted her as his wife. A son, Viṣvavōbrahma was born to her. Pulastya also married Havirbhu, Kardama Prajāpati*'s daughter. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa; Bhāgavata*

**Puḷinda** – Son of King Bhadraka and father of Ghōsha.

*Bhagavata*

**Pulōma** – Wife of Bhṛgu. Mother of Chyavana. While she was pregnant, she was being protected by Agni (*the God of Fire*) per Bhṛgu's request. An Asura*, also named Pulōma came and asked Agni who she was. When Agni replied that she was Pulōma, wife of Bhṛgu, the Asura Pulōma said "She was betrothed to me first but Bhṛgu married her." As the Asura, taking the form of a wild boar, was carrying her away, the baby slipped out of the womb and stared angrily at the Asura. The Asura was burned to a crisp due to the fiery stare. The baby was Chyavana. Pulōma returned home along with her son and related her experience to her husband. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Puṇḍarīka I** – Daughter of Sage Vasishṭha and wife of Prāṇa. Their son was Dyutimanta. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Puṇḍarīka II** – Son of Nabha. His son was Kshēmadhanva. *Bhāgavata*

**Puṇḍarīka III** – Son of a Brahmin named Jahnu who lived in the city of Lōhadanḍa. Abandoning the way of life prescribed for Brahmins, he consorted with prostitutes. He neglected the care of his parents and pleased only his wife. Once, his parents were going to Kāṣi* on foot. He and his wife, riding horses, passed his parents and stopped at the Āṣram of a Muni named Kukkuṭa and asked him how far the Ganga river was from there. When the Muni told them that he had never bathed in Ganga and that he did not know Kāṣi and Ganga, Puṇḍarīka laughed derisively and heckled him saying he was a fake Muni.

Just then, he saw three ugly, Asura*-like women enter Kukkuṭa's

Asram, clean the place by removing all the trash and garbage and themselves be transformed into beautiful women. Astounded by what he saw, Puṇḍarīka asked them "Who are you? How were you transformed so dramatically?" They replied "We are the rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*). We became ugly because we were tainted by the sins of those who bathed in us. We were cleansed by doing a service to this Muni." Puṇḍarīka, learning that Kukkuṭa was invested with such spiritual power only by serving his parents, started looking after his parents. Lord Vishṇu, pleased by his devotion to his parents, came to his place. Busy attending to his parents' needs, Puṇḍarīka asked Vishṇu to wait standing on a brick outside and that he will come and see Him when his chores are done. Pleased even more by his devotion to his parents, Vishṇu gave him all the boons he wanted. Blessed by Him who showered boons on Puṇḍarīka, the site became a Tīrtha* variously known as "Pāṇḍuranga Kshētra, Panḍarīpura, and Puṇḍarīkapura". *Kalki (Bhavishya) Purāṇa*

**Punja** – An Apsara*. Once, Rāvaṇa stripped her naked and raped her. She complained to Lord Brahma about it. Brahma gave Rāvaṇa a Ṣāpa* that if he ever tries to have sex with a woman not married to him, his head would explode (*There was another episode in which Rāvaṇa raped the Apsara Rambha. Rambha's lover Nalakūbara then gave Rāvaṇa a Ṣāpa that if Rāvaṇa ever had sex with any woman against her will, his head would explode*). Sometime later, Punja also received a Ṣāpa and was born as a female Vānara* named Anjana. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Pūraṇa** – Son of Kadruva. A Nāga*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Purāṇapravartakas** – Traiyyāruṇi, Kaṣyapa, Sāvarṇi, Akṛtavraṇa, Vaiṣampāyana, and Harītaka learnt the Purāṇas from Sage Vyāsa's disciple Rōmaharshaṇa and propagated them throughout the world. They thus came to be known as Purāṇapravartakas (*Pravartaka is Sanskrit for 'promoter'*). *Bhāgavata*

**Puranjana** – A king, friend of Vigjnāta. He searched the whole world for a city suitable for him. He finally found a beautiful city with golden palaces and nine gates, and entered it. There, he saw a beautiful young woman named Pramadōttama and falling in love with her, asked her who she was. She said "I do not know who built this city, but I rule it. These are my female companions. Stay here and rule the city with me." After spending some time enjoying sexual pleasures with her, he left to go hunting without saying anything to his wife. After being away for several days, he returned to his Antahpura*. His wife was sad due to her husband's unexpected absence. He soothed her over her anger and forgetting his responsibilities as king, devoted himself exclusively to making love to his wife. Several sons and daughters were born to them. The king and queen performed the marriages of their children. Puranjana remained occupied in lovemaking. Then, a Gandharva* named Chaṇḍavēga, with a Gandharva army, attacked Puranjana's city. A commander of the city's forces, Prajāgara, defeated the Gandharva king. Soon afterwards, a foreign king named Bhaya and the daughter of Kāla, Kālakanyaka, entered the city. Puranjana was seduced by Kālakanyaka and left the city. Some sacrificial animals injured by him during Yāgas attacked and killed Puranjana. Puranjana died while he was preoccupied with thoughts of his wife and was born in his next life as the daughter of the king

of Vidarbha. King Malayakētu married her. *Bhāgavata*

**Puranjaya I** – A king of the Sūrya (*solar; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Chandra, or lunar*) dynasty. Son of Vikukshi (*also known as Ṣaṣāda*). Once, the Dēvas, unable to bear the harassment by Asuras*, went to Brahma and Vishṇu and complained, who told them "We will be within Puranjaya. Indra* must become his vehicle and carry him. Puranjaya will then be able to kill the Asuras. Go plead with him." Thus directed by Brahma and Vishṇu, the Dēvas went to Puranjaya and requested him to kill the Asuras and save their city. Puranjaya told them he will come to battle riding a bull. Indra took the form of a bull. Puranjaya sat on the Kakut (*hump*) of Indra the bull, defeated the Asuras and drove them away. As a result of sitting on the hump of the bull that was Indra, he came to be known as Kakutstha and Indravāhana. Puranjaya's son was Anēnasa. *Vishṇu Purāṇa; Bhāgavata*

**Puranjaya II** – A king. Son of Bṛhadratha. His Minister, Ṣaunaka, killed him and took over as king. *Bhāgavata*

**Pūrṇima** – Daughter of Marīchi and his wife Kaḷa. In a later life, she was born as Ganga (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*). *Bhāgavata*

**Purōchana** – Member of Duryōdhana's inner circle. On Duryōdhana's direction, he had the wax house built, to kill the Pāṇḍavas by fire. He employed a tribal woman to give him information on the movements of the Pāṇḍavas to find the opportune time to set fire to the wax house. Bhīma (*second oldest of the Pāṇḍavas*) discovered his plan. One night, while Purōchana

was sleeping, Bhīma set fire to his house. He died in the fire. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pūru I** – Son of Chākshusha Manu* and his wife Naḍvala. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Pūru II** – Son of Sage Jahnu. *Bhāgavata*

**Pūru III** – Son of Yayāti. His mother was Ṣarmishṭa. Due to a Ṣāpa* from Ṣukra (*Guru of the Asuras**), Yayāti became prematurely old, but did not lose his youthful desires. He, therefore, summoned all his sons and explaining that he would like to continue to enjoy youthful pleasures, asked that one of them accept premature aging in his place. All his sons declined the transfer of the Ṣāpa. Then, he summoned his youngest son, Pūru and asked him again if he would accept old age in his stead. Pūru agreed and Yayāti remained youthful and enjoyed all the pleasures of life for a very long time. After enjoying life to the fullest, he exchanged his youth for his son's old age. He crowned the now youthful Pūru the new king and retired to the forest. Pūru's wife was Kausalya (*different from Lord Rāma's mother*). They had a son named Janamējaya (*different from Arjuna's great-grandson*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Purukutsa** – Son of Bindumati and Māndhāta. Once, some Nāga* princes took him to their world and gave him their sister Narmada in marriage. At the time, the Āngirasas went to Nāga Lōka (*world*) and were harassing the Nāgas. Narmada told Purukutsa about the harassment. Purukutsa chased the Āngirasas away from Nāga Lōka. He then returned to his country. Purukutsa and his wife had a son named Trasadasya. *Bhāgavata; Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Purūrava** – Son of Ila (*Sudyumna while he was in female form*) and Budha*. His wife was Kausalya (*different from Lord Rāma's mother*). He and his wife had a son, Janamējaya (*different from Arjuna's great-grandson*). Once, blind with pride, Purūrava stole money from Brahmins. The Brahmins brought Sage Sanatkumāra with them and approached Purūrava to request that he return the money he took from them. When he refused to see them, they angrily gave him a Ṣāpa* that he will become insane.

Once, Purūrava saw the Apsara* Ūrvaṣi, fell in love with her and asked her to live with him. She agreed but imposed a condition that if he ever appeared nude to her or if her pet deer cubs were lost, she would leave him. Purūrava agreed to her condition and Ūrvaṣi stayed with Purūrava for a long time. They had six sons, Āyu, Ṣrutāyu, Satyāyu, Raya, Jaya, and Vijaya. A Gandharva* named Viṣvāvasu, intending to cause separation between Purūrava and Ūrvaṣi, stole her pet deer cubs. Purūrava, who at the time was naked in bed, saw the Gandharva stealing the cubs, and chased him. He was seen naked by Ūrvaṣi. She left him and went away, in accordance with her condition accepted by Purūrava.

Purūrava, searching for Ūrvaṣi, reached Kurukshētra. He saw Ūrvaṣi there and spoke with her. He asked her to return to him. She told him to request the Gandharvas to let her go with him. He prayed to the Gandharvas. Pleased with him, they gave him an earthen pot with fire in it. Considering the pot to be Ūrvaṣi (*perhaps due to Gandharva magic*), he wandered in the forest with the pot. One day, relizing that the pot is not Ūrvaṣi, he left it in the forest and went home but was constantly thinking of Ūrvaṣi. At

the time, the Trēta Yuga (*Yuga is Sanskrit for 'epoch'; each cycle has four Yugas – Kṛta, Trēta, Dwāpara, and Kali, in sequence*) began. The Vēdas, in Purūrava's mind, seemed to be three kinds of action plans for life. He went to where he left the pot of fire and saw that an Aṣvattha (*Sanskrit for 'Holy Fig'*) tree had grown from the fire. He broke two sticks of kindling from the tree and considering one stick to be himself, the other to be Ūrvaṣi and the wood between them to be their son, he was chanting Mantras. An Agni (*fire*), Jātavēda erupted. He split it into three Agnis, which came to be known as Trētāgni. *Bhāgavata*

Purūrava performed a Yāga and went to the Gandharva world, thinking of Ūrvaṣi. He learnt the duties and responsibilities of a king from Vāyu (*the God of Wind*). *Mahā Bhārata*

Once, Purūrava went to the Naimiṣa forest (*the favoured location of Sages*) to observa a Sattra Yāga being performed by Munis. He saw that the entire structure where the Yāga was taking place was built with gold. The thought of stealing the structure occurred to Purūrava. The Munis sensed his intent and hit him with a weapon of diamond. Purūrava fell to the ground and died. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*

**Pūrvachitti** – An Apsara*. When Āgnīdhra was performing Tapas* for the purpose of begetting children, Lord Brahma sent her to him. Āgnīdhra fell in love with her at first sight and married her. They had sons including Nābhi and Kimpurusha. *Bhāgavata*

**Pushkala** – Son of Bharata (*brother of Lord Rāma; son of Kaikēyi*). Bharata had the City of Pushkala built in his name and crowned him king. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Pushkara I** – Son of Varuṇa (*the God of Rain*). He and an Apsara* named Pramōchana had a daughter named Mālini. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Pushkara II** – Son of Bharata (*brother of Lord Rāma; son of Kaikēyi*). Bharata killed the sons of the Gandharva* Ṣailūsha and gave his kingdom to Pushkara and his brother Pushkarāksha. Pushkara's city was Pushkalāvati Pura. *Bhāgavata; Rāmāyaṇa*

**Pushkara III** – Son of King Nala's paternal uncle. He was a very evil man. He played games of chance with Nala and defeating him with the help of Kali, expelled Nala from his kingdom. During the time he ruled the kingdom, he harassed the people. Nala came back, defeated him and reclaimed his kingdom. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pushkarāksha** – Son of Bharata (*brother of Lord Rāma; son of Kaikēyi*). *Bhāgavata; Rāmāyaṇa*

**Pushkaraṣāli** – Husband of a woman named Kunḍala. He was killed by an Asura* named Ṣumbhu. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Pushkariṇi I** – Wife of Chakshushu. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Pushkariṇi II** – Wife of Ulmuka *And* mother of Anga. *Bhāgavata*

**Pushpadamshṭra** – Son of Kadruva. A Nāga*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pushpadanta** – King of the country of Yugandhara. A devotee of Lord Ṣiva, he would not even have a drink of water before worshipping Him. One Ṣivarātri (*Rātri is Sanskrit for 'night'. Once a year, on this special day for Ṣiva worship, devotees fast and stay awake all night*), he fasted and worshipped Ṣiva. Ṣiva appeared and asked him to choose a boon. Pushpadanta wished that Ṣiva and His Consort Pārvati appear to him every day. Ṣiva

granted his wish. Every day, he would go to Kailāsa (*Ṣiva's abode in the Himālayas*) and visit Ṣiva and Pārvati. One day, while he was in Kailāsa, he overheard Pārvati requesting Ṣiva to tell Her a unique and secret story. Ṣiva narrated such a story. Pushpadanta heard the story, without being seen by them. After the story was finished, he greeted them and returned home. It was rather late at night when he returned. His wife, Dēvadatta, was angry with him, suspecting him of adultery. Pushpadanta explained to her why he was late and repeated to her the story he suurreptitiously heard from Ṣiva. Ṣiva and Pārvati learning later on that Pushpadanta, in hiding, heard the secret story Ṣiva told Pārvati, were angry. They gave Pushpadanta a Ṣāpa* that he would become a leader of fiends and live in a cemetary. Pushpadanta became a poltergeist as a result of the Ṣāpa. *Devānga Purāṇa*

He was sent by the Dēvas as an emissary to Ṣankhachūḍa. He tried to persuade Ṣankhachūḍa that it was not a good idea to fight against the Dēvas, but the Asura did not heed the advice. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Pushpaka** – Flying vehicle of Kubēra (*the God of Wealth*). Lord Brahma Himself gave it to Kubēra. Rāvaṇa's mother, jealous of her nephew Kubēra for having the vehicle, persuaded Rāvaṇa to somehow take it away from his step-brother Kubēra. Rāvaṇa took it by force from Kubēra. Lord Rāma, after killing Rāvaṇa, left Lanka* by this vehicle. Afterwards, He returned it to Kubēra. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Pushpārṇa** – Son of Vatsara and his wife Sarvarthi. Prabha and Dōsha were his wives. *Bhāgavata*

**Pushpōtkaṭa** – Daughter of Sumāli. She was one of the wives of Viṣravasu. Mahōdara and Mahāpārṣva were her sons. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

Pulastya, angry with Vaiṣravaṇa, directed Visravasu to harm Vaiṣravaṇa. Learning of this, Vaiṣravaṇa (*another name for Kubēra*) approached Viṣravasu and pleaded "O Dēva! I am like your son. Be kind to me." He also gave Viṣravasu three Asura* women, Pushpōtkaṭa, Mālini, and Pāka. Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa were the sons of Viṣravasu and Pushpōtkaṭa. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pushṭi** – Daughter of Dharaṇi and her husband Daksha Prajāpati*. The Manu* named Dharma married her. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Pushya** – Son of Hiraṇyanābha and father of Dhruvasandhi. *Bhāgavata*

**Pūtaki** – (*also known as Pūtana*) An Asura* woman. She lived in the kingdom of Kamsa (*Lord Kṛshṇa's evil uncle*). Kamsa knew that Dēvaki's son Kṛshṇa was alive and growing up somewhere. Because of the prophecy that Kṛshṇa would be the cause of his death, he wanted Kṛshṇa killed. But he did not know exactly where he was. Therefore, he decided to have all children in his kingdom killed. He summoned Pūtaki and directed her to kill all the male children by poisoning them with her breast milk. Accepting Kamsa's mission, Pūtaki took the form of a beautiful young woman. She proceeded to visit each house in which a male child was present, act as if she loved little children, and have them suckle at her breast. The children who drank her milk dropped dead. She eventually came to the house of Nanda. Yaṣōda and her companions did not recognise her as an Asura. They let her

approach Kṛshṇa. When she breast-fed Kṛshṇa, He sucked out all her strength. Crying loudly, she returned to her Asura form and fell dead. In an earlier life, She was Ratnamāla, daughter of Emperor Bali. *Bhāgavata; Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Pūtātma** – A Brahmin. Cousin of Kaṣyapa. He worshipped Ṣiva for many years in the city of Kāṣi*. Ṣiva appeared to him and gave him boons including the position of a Dikpālaka*, position of the five airs of the body, and omnipresence. He thereby became Vāyu (*the God of Wind*). (*Kāṣi Khanḍa is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**). *Kāṣi Khanḍa*

**Putraka** – A Brahmin. When he was still in his mother's womb, his father deserted his pregnant wife to save himself from the famine gripping his country and went abroad. While he was still a child, his mother and his siblings were dependent on him. Goddess Pārvati requested Lord Ṣiva "This boy was a devotee of mine in his previous life. Please make it so that he will be capable of supporting his mother and brothers." Ṣiva gave him a boon that every morning, there will be much gold under his head when he wakes up. He became very wealthy and became a king. He was making large charitable contributions to Brahmins. Hearing that the king was giving money to Brahmins, his father came to his city. Realizing that the king was his own son, the greedy father, wanting to rule as king, contracted some thugs to murder his son. Putraka escaped death by bribing his executioners and went to the Vindhya forest. There he saw two sons of Maya* fighting over a pair of wooden sandals and a stick. He laughed at the brothers and asked "Why fight over these objects?" They explained that the objects had magical power, that the sandals would carry the wearer to

where he wished to go and that any shape drawn with the stick will become the object drawn. He said "Why fight each other? The one of you who runs the fastest should take both objects." Mindlessly, they both started running away. Putraka used the sandals and went away.

He reached a city. He heard that the daughter of the ruler of the city, named Pāṭalī, was beautiful. One night, wearing the magic sandals, he reached her room. Pāṭalī also fell in love with him. They were enjoying passionate sex. Pāṭalī's father came to know of the intrusion and went to his daughter's quarters to arrest the intruder. With Pāṭalī on his lap, Putraka flew away wearing the sandals and descended on the banks of the Ganga river. There, he drew a city complete with palaces, using the magic stick. A city and palaces were instantly formed. Naming the city as Pāṭalīputra, he ruled as king. *Kathāsaritsāgara*

**Pyla** – Disciple of Kṛshṇadwaipāyana (*name of Sage Vyāsa*). When the Vēdas were all together, he organised them into four parts. He specialized in the Ṛg Vēda's precepts. Udanka was his disciple. *Mahā Bhārata; Bhāgavata*

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**Rabhya** – A king. His wife was Rukmarēkha. They were childless for a very long time. After he performed many Yāgas, a daughter was born to them and was named Ēkāvaḷi. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Rādha I** – Daughter of Vṛshabhānu (*descendant of Hari, one of the many names of Lord Vishṇu*) and his wife Kaḷāvati. She was a paternal aunt of Lord Kṛshṇa. (*An alternative story about her birth is that she was born from Rās, the dance in which each Gōpika or cowherd girl, seems to be dancing with Kṛshṇa at the same time, and ran in front of Kṛshṇa. One of the Sanskrit words for running being Dhāvana, she is said to be Rādha as the combination of Rās and Dhāvana.*) Kṛshṇa fell in love with her on first sight. The Gōpikas were born from the hair follicles on her skin. Kṛshṇa was playing Rās (*romantic group dance*) with the Gōpikas. Rādha, unable to contain her jealousy at seeing her lover with other women, spoke to Kṛshṇa harshly. Sudāma, Kṛshṇa's closest friend was by Kṛshṇa's side and rebuked Rādha for her intemperate words. Rādha gave Sudāma a Ṣāpa* that he would be born as an Asura. As a result, he was born as Ṣankhachūḍa. *Dēvī Bhāgavata; Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Rādha II** – Wife of a chariot-driver named Atiratha. She was

childless. One day, her husband brought home Karṇa (*the baby boy born to Kunti before she got married. Originally named Vasusēna*) who was floating down the river in a basket. She raised him with great love and affection. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Raghu** – Son of Dilīpa of the Sūrya (*solar; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Chandra, or lunar*) dynasty. His mother was Sudakshiṇa. He protected the sacrificial animal against thieves while his father was performing a Yāga. When he was performing a Yāga named Viṣvajit, Raghu gave away to Brahmins not only all of his own wealth but riches he borrowed from Kubēra (*God of Wealth*) as well.

As King Raghu was performing his one hundredth Yāga, Indra* himself stole the sacrificial horse. Raghu immediately attacked Indra and survived after being hit by Indra's Vajrāyudha (*a thunderbolt, Indra's signature weapon, literally 'weapon of diamond'*). Impressed by Raghu's might, Indra offered any boon other than the return of the sacrificial horse. Indra gave Raghu the boon of his choice.

Once, a Muni named Kautsa, disciple of Sage Varatantu, came to King Raghu seeking money. Having already given away all his wealth, Raghu gave the Muni water in a clay pot to wash his feet. Kautsa, realizing Raghu had nothing to give him, was about to leave. Raghu stopped him and went to Kubēra, borrowed some money and gave it to Kautsa. Raghu's son was Aja (*grandfather of Lord Rāma*). *Raghu Vamṣa*

**Rahasya** – Dharmaraja gave women a Ṣāpa* that they will not be able to keep a Rahasya (*secret*). The reason is as follows: Kunti gave birth to Karṇa before she was married. But she never

revealed to anyone other than Karṇa that Karṇa was her son until after the Mahā Bhārata war ended. As Dharmarāja was performing funeral rites for those near and dear ones who had died in the war, she asked that Karṇa be included, since he was her son. Dharmarāja became furious on hearing this. He said "If you had let us know this earlier, we would have had no quarrel with Karṇa, actually there would not have been a war (*while Duryōdhana had wanted to eliminate his cousins since his boyhood, it was not until he found Karṇa and formed a close friendship with him that he and his advisors started thinking in terms of provoking war. Dharmarāja believed it was Karṇa's mastery of archery and his hatred of Arjuna that gave Duryōdhana the confidence that he had a chance of defeating Dharmarāja and his brothers in war*)." Dharmarāja reasoned that a great war of destruction occurred by Kunti keeping Karṇa's origin a secret and he would be doing everyone a favour by preventing women from being able to keep a secret. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Rāhu** – An Asura*. Son of Simhika. At the end of Kshīrasāgara Mathana (*the churning of the ocean of milk*) the Dēvas and Asuras sat in rows facing each other, to receive Amṛtam*. Lord Vishṇu, assuming the form of a beautiful woman (*Jaganmōhini, 'enchantress of the world'*) started distributing the nectar, to the Dēva row first. It became clear that there would probably be none left for the Asuras. Rāhu, realizing this, snuck into the Dēva row and was imbibing Amṛtam. Sūrya (*the Sun God*) and Chandra (*the Moon God*) noticed that an Asura had surreptitiously joined the Dēvas and signaled to Vishṇu. Vishṇu, using his signature weapon, the Chakra*, cut Rāhu's neck off. However, since he did consume

some Amṛtam, he remained alive. Rāhu became a sworn enemy of Sūrya and Chandra from then on. Once in a while, he would swallow (*eclipse*) one of them. Rāhu had a son named Mēghahāsa. *Mahā Bhārata; Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Rahūgaṇa** – King of Sindhu (*a country, called Sind now, a part of Pakistan*). Once, he was being carried in a palanquin by servants on his way to Sage Kapila's Āṣram to learn Vēdānta (*Hindu philosophy of the Supreme Being, the Soul, the afterlife, etc.*). The servants, tired after a while, put the shaft of the palanquin on the shoulders of a Brahmin they encountered on the way, who was aimlessly wandering like an insane person (*the man was Bharata, son of Ṛshabha, in his previous life*). The Brahmin carried the palanquin as if it did not weigh anything, practically running with it over hill and dale. The king, tired and irritated by the constant jerky movement loudly cursed out the Brahmin. The Brahmin calmly explained the essence of Vēdānta, that it is only the body that experiences emotions such as anger, and not the soul. The king descended from the palanquin and saluted the Brahmin with a Namaskāra*, realizing he was a Vēdānti (*one who is well-versed in Vēdānta*). *Bhāgavata*

**Raibhya I** – A Muni. His sons were named Arvāvasu and Parāvasu. They were both learned men. A man named Avakrīta was sent to the brothers by his father, to learn from them. Avakrīta, however, was jealous of the brothers and he made lustful advances to Kṛshṇa, the wife of Parāvasu. She informed Raibhya of Avakrīta's behaviour. Raibhya performed a Hōma* from which he created a beautiful woman, and an Asura*. He knew that Avakrīta was invulnerable to attack as long as his Kamanḍala* was in his

hands. He sent the beautiful woman first to trick Avakrīta to put down the Kamanḍala and the Asura later to kill Avakrīta, which the Asura did. One day, Parāvasu came across Raibhya and unable to recognise him in the pre-dawn darkness, thought what he was seeing was a wild animal and struck a hard blow at it. Raibhya died from the blow. At about that time, the Dēvas, pleased with Hōmas performed by Arvāvasu, offered him the boon of his choice. He asked to restore Raibhya to life. Raibhya came back to life. He once asked Bṛhaspati (*the Guru of the Dēvas*) "Is salvation achieved by Karma (*meaning right actions for each person based on their sex, age, marital status, caste, etc.*) or by the acquisition of knowledge?" and learnt the truth. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Raibhya II** – Son of Sumati, who was the son of Antisāra. Dushyanta was his son. *Bhāgavata*

**Raivata I** – Son of Rēvati (*the star, not Balarāma's wife*) and Durdama. He became a Manu*. During his Manvantara (*reign as Manu*), one named Vibhu was Indra*. Saptarshis* were Hiraṇyarōma, Vēdaṣrī, Ūrdhvabāhu, Vēdabāhu, Sudāma, Parjanya, and Mahāmuni. Raivata's sons including Bala, Bandhu, Swayambhāvya, Satyaka, Prativindhya, and Arjuna became great kings. *Bhāgavata; Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

During Raivata's Manvantara, Lord Vishṇu was born as the son of Ṣubhra and his wife Vikunṭha. *Bhāgavata*

**Raivata II** – Son of Ānarta. He built a city named Kuṣasthali in the middle of the ocean. He had sons including Kakudmi and a daughter named Rēvati. Unable to determine who would be a suitable husband for his daughter, Raivata took her to Lord

Brahma to obtain His suggestions. Seeing that Kinnaras (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers. They have horses' heads over human bodies*) and Kimpurushas (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers. They have human heads over horses' bodies*) were performing dances, he waited for an instant before addressing his question to Brahma. Brahma told him that during the instant he waited since arriving in His world, eons had passed on earth and those who had wanted to marry his daughter as well as their descendants had passed on. Brahma advised him to give his daughter in marriage to Balarāma, who has aspects of Lord Vishṇu and was on earth then. Raivata followed Brahma's advice and performed Rēvati's marriage to Balarāma. *Bhāgavata*

**Raivata III** – A mountain. Its original name was Kumudagiri. When the Nakshatra (*star*) Rēvati fell on it due to the Ṣāpa of Ṛtumanta, it came to be known as Raivata. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Rājādhidēvi** – Sister of Vasudēva (*Father of Lord Kṛshṇa*). Jayatsēna married her. They had sons named Vinda and Anuvinda and a daughter Mitravinda (*one of the eight wives of Kṛshṇa*). *Bhāgavata*

**Rājagṛhapura** – Capital city of King Mēghasandha, grandson of Jarāsandha. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Rājanya** – Son of Uparicharavasu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Rājasāvarṇi** – Son of Dēvasāvarṇi and father of Vṛshadhwaja. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Rājavardhana** – Son of Dama and father of Sudhṛti. *Bhāgavata*

**Raji** – Son of Āyu. Nahusha and Kshatravṛddha were his brothers.

Once, when war broke out between Dēvas and Asuras*, the Dēvas went to Lord Brahma and asked Him which side would triumph. Brahma told them that whichever side Raji was on would win. The Dēvas went to Raji and requested him to join them. He did and the Dēvas won. Indra* presented his city Amaravati to Raji. Raji returned Indra's kingdom back to him and went to Tapōvana*. Raji's sons, not honouring their father's intent, drove Indra away and proceeded to rule Indra's city. This included receiving Havya*. They did not honour Indra's demand that they give his city back. Indra then performed a Yāga and was able to defeat Raji's sons. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Rājyavardhana** – A king. His wife was Mānini. One day, while washing his hair, she saw gray hairs. She was saddened that he was getting old prematurely. The citizens of Rājyavardhana's kingdom, learning of the plight of their king, were also saddened. They collectively prayed to Sūrya (*the Sun God, considered to be the source of life and health*) to increase the life expectancy of their monarch. Sūrya gave them the boon they sought. Rājyavardhana, contemplating the future, was sad that the citizens of his kingdom would be passing away while he lives a long life. He prayed to Sūrya with the wish that his citizens also should live as long as he does. Sūrya granted that boon as well. *Mārkaṇḍēya Purāṇa*

**Raktabīja** – An Asura*. When the Asura Rambha died, his wife put his body on the funeral pyre, performed the funeral rites and prepared to immolate herself on the pyre with her husband's body. Just then, a ferocious being emerged from the fire. He was Raktabīja who was Rambha come back from the dead.

Raktabīja became the commander-in-chief of the Asura brothers, Ṣumbha and Niṣumbha. He was fighting against Dēvi along with Ṣumbha and Niṣumbha. Each drop of blood falling to the ground from his body was turning into an Asura (*Raktabīja is Sanskrit for "blood seed"*). Dēvi found Herself unable to defeat or kill someone who was generating Asuras from every drop of his blood. Then Dēvi created an aspect of Herself named Chanḍi who positioned Herself so that She could swallow any drop of blood falling from Raktabīja's wounds. Then Dēvi was able to kill Raktabīja. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Rāma** – Son of Daṣaratha, ruler of Ayōdhya (*which exists by the same name today, even though that claim is disputed in some quarters*). Daṣaratha had performed a Putra Kāmēshṭi Yāga*; a Yagjna Purusha (*at the successful conclusion of a Yāga, a divine being, called a Yagjna Purusha, emerges from the fire and delivers the desired result or fruit of the Yāga to the performer*) handed Daṣaratha a bowl of Pāyasa (*milk boiled with rice and sugar, served at all religious ceremonies and festivals*). His three wives partook of the Pāyasa. As a result, Rāma was born to his first wife Kausalya; Bharata to his youngest and favourite wife Kaikēyi; and Lakshmaṇa and Ṣatrughna to Sumitra. (*The story about the distribution of the holy Pāyasa was that when Daṣaratha received it from the Yagjna Purusha, he gave half to his eldest wife and half to his favourite wife. Sumitra was sad that she did not receive a portion of the Pāyasa. Kausalya and Kaikēyi each gave half her share to Sumitra, which is why she gave birth to two sons.*) It was believed that Lakshmaṇa was born due to the portion Kausalya gave to Sumitra. Therefore, Lakshmaṇa had a

special bond with Rāma.

While Rāma and Lakshmaṇa were still quite young, Sage Viṣvāmitra came to Daṣaratha and requested him to send the two boys along with him for protection from harassment by Asuras*. Daṣaratha, unable to deny the Sage's request, sent them with Viṣvāmitra. (*There is more to the story than respect for and fear of the wrath of Viṣvāmitra. Sage Vasishṭha, Daṣaratha's Guru, overcame Daṣaratha's extreme reluctance to part with Rāma by explaining that protection from Asuras was just an excuse – with his tremendous spiritual power, Viṣvāmitra did not need external help against Asuras. The real reason Viṣvāmitra wanted Rāma and Lakshmaṇa with him for some time was that he could teach them and give them some Astras [weapons] more powerful than any that Vasishṭha could give them, to prepare them for the coming war against Rāvaṇa.*) Viṣvāmitra took them with him and taught them archery. Then he took them to a place which the Asura brothers Mārīcha and Subāhu frequented, and asked them to kill the Asuras. As the brothers battled and killed Subāhu, Mārīcha escaped with his life and left the forest. Rāma and Lakshmaṇa then encountered the mother of the two Asuras they had just fought, Tāṭaka, who threatened to swallow them with her mouth wide open the size of a mountain cave. Viṣvāmitra advised them to kill her too. Rāma did so, notwithstanding the stricture against a warrior killing a member of the fair sex. Afterwards, Viṣvāmitra led Rāma and Lakshmaṇa by way of many Sages' Āṣrams and through forests. At one point, Rāma touched a rock with his foot. A woman named Ahalya, released from a Ṣāpa* emerged from the rock and went on her way after saluting Rāma. The Sage then took

Rāma and Lakshmaṇa to Mithila, the city which Sīta's father Janaka ruled.

Janaka had announced that he would give Sīta in marriage to whoever could string the bow of Lord Ṣiva that has been in his palace. Several princes tried to string the bow but failed even to lift it. When Rāma attempted it, the bow broke as he held it in His hands. Happy that his vow was upheld, Janaka gave Sīta in marriage to Rāma. As Rāma, Sīta and their retinue were proceeding to Ayōdhya after the wedding, Paraṣurāma (*who was Lord Vishṇu's prior incarnation*) confronted them and blocked their way. Rāma fought and defeated Paraṣurāma. Paraṣurāma, then recognizing Rāma's divinity (*and as his successor as Vishṇu's incarnation*), saluted Him with a Namaskāra*. Paraṣurāma's Tējas* entered Rāma's body.

Daṣaratha then made arrangements on a grand scale to install Rāma as the crown prince. Sage Vasishṭha set a Muhūrtam (*auspicious time and place*) for the celebration. Daṣaratha went to the Antahpura* to inform Kaikēyi of the plans. Kaikēyi asked him to exile Rāma to the forest for fourteen years and install her son Bharata as crown prince instead of Rāma. Having promised Kaikēyi long ago two wishes whenever she wanted them, Daṣaratha was powerless to deny her requests, but was devastated by grief at having to be separated from Rāma. Rāma, of course, was not the least bit upset at this turn of events and promptly went to see Kaikēyi and reassured her that he will uphold his father's promise to her.

Rāma, accompanied by Sīta and Lakshmaṇa, left for the forest, dressed in rough garments made from a tree bark. A boatman

named Guha took them across the river Ganga. By the time they reached the Chitrakūṭa forest, Bharata arrived there. He begged them to return to the city and Rāma to retain the crown. Rāma, however, insisted that their father's promise must be honoured and that Bharata should govern per Kaikēyi's wish. Rāma, Sīta and Lakshmaṇa then proceeded from Chitrakūṭa to the Āṣram of Sage Atri. There Anasūya (*Atri's wife*) taught Sīta the principles of being a good wife. Leaving the Āṣram, they killed an Asura named Virādha who attempted to block their way. After visiting several Munis including Sutīksha, they reached the Āṣram of Sage Agastya. After staying there for a few days, they followed Agastya's suggestion and went to a place called Panchavaṭi and built a cottage there.

While at Panchavaṭi, Lakshmaṇa was cutting fruit from trees and, failing to see him, killed the son of Ṣūrpaṇakha (*Rāvaṇa's sister*), who was sitting inside a bush. Ṣūrpaṇakha, searching for her son's killer, saw Rāma and fell in love with him and asked him to marry her. Rāma jokingly suuggested that she should ask Lakshmaṇa. Lakshmaṇa too rejected her request. Angry at the rejection, Ṣūrpaṇakha attempted to swallow Sīta. Lakshmaṇa then cut off her nose and ears. She went and complained about Rāma and Lakshmaṇa to Asuras including Khara and Dūshaṇa (*cousins of Rāvaṇa*). Khara, Dūshaṇa, Triṣira and other Asuras attacked Rāma and Lakshmaṇa and were killed in the ensuing battle.

Rāvaṇa learned about these events. Ṣūrpaṇakha also went to him and lamented that two mere humans had humiliated her. She encouraged Rāvaṇa to abduct Sīta. Rāvaṇa sought the help of Mārīcha (*son of Tāṭaka*). Mārīcha took the form of a golden deer

and was skipping playfully in front of Sīta. Sīta requested Rāma to get the deer for her. Rāma went chasing the deer, and hit it with an arrow. The deer, in a human voice, shouted "Alas! Lakshmaṇa!" Lakshmaṇa left the cottage, thinking it was Rāma who shouted for help. Rāvaṇa then came in the guise of a mendicant and carried Sīta away.

Rāma and Lakshmaṇa returned to the cottage. Concerned at not finding Sīta there, they went looking for her. They saw Jaṭāyu, who died (*from the injuries sustained fighting Rāvaṇa*) after telling them that Rāvaṇa carried Sīta away. Rāma and Lakshmaṇa performed funeral rites for their friend Jaṭāyu. As they were proceeding in the search for Sīta, a grotesque-looking man, Kabandha, tried to swallow them. They killed him. Released from a Ṣāpa*, Kabandha resumed his normal form, saluted Rāma with a Namaskāra, and related his story. When informed that they were searching for Sīta, he advised them to go to Kishkindha (*a place ruled by Vānaras**), and establish an alliance with Sugrīva who could help them.

Rāma and Lakshmaṇa reached the banks of the river Pampa. Sugrīva's Minister, Hanumān, greeted them with a Namaskāra and after hearing their story, he took them to Sugrīva. Sugrīva received them with full hospitality. They informed Sugrīva that they were searching for Sīta who had been abducted by Rāvaṇa. Sugrīva showed Rāma several ornaments, wrapped in a cloth, that he had found. Rāma recognised them as Sīta's and wept. Sugrīva told Rāma about his blood feud with his older and very powerful brother Vāli and requested Rāma to kill him. At the same time, Sugrīva expressed his doubt if Rāma was strong enough to fight

his brother. Rāma demonstrated his strength by breaking seven trees with one blow. Sugrīva revealed that because of a boon, absolutely no one can survive a direct confrontation with Vāli and the only way to fight him is from a concealed position. Bolstered by Rāma's agreement to help, Sugrīva challenged his brother to a fight. Vāli came. As the two of them were fighting, Rāma hid behind a tree ready to shoot an arrow at Vāli but was unable to distinguish one brother from the other. So Rāma did nothing. Sugrīva was soundly defeated and barely escaped with his life. Sugrīva called Vāli out a second time but this time, he wore a garland of flowers to help Rāma to target his brother. Rāma shot an arrow from behind the tree and killed Vāli. In his dying moment, Vāli realized it was Rāma who shot him by stealth, but did not mind because he knew Rāma was a great man. However, Vāli's widow Tāra, grieving for the loss of her husband, gave Rāma a Ṣāpa that even if Sīta is rescued, she will not be able to stay with her husband for long.

(*Rāma was not absolved from the sin of killing Vāli by subterfuge until his incarnation as Lord Kṛshṇa. In that incarnation, Vāli's son Angada, reborn as a hunter, shoots an arrow into Kṛshṇa's toe, mistaking it for an animal. Kṛshṇa dies [i.e., ends the incarnation] as a result. Jagannātha Māhātmyam*)

Sugrīva was crowned as the king of Kishkindha. Vāli's son Angada was made the crown prince. Rāma and Lakshmaṇa were stuck in Kishkindha for the entire rainy season. Sugrīva sent Vānaras as scouts to search for Sīta. Rāma provided a signet ring to show to Sīta as proof that whoever found her was an agent of her husband. Hanumān was the one who did find Sīta and

informed Rāma of Sīta's situation.

Rāma and Lakshmaṇa reached the coast accompanied by a Vānara army. By then Vibhīshaṇa, Rāvaṇa's youngest brother, had already come from Lanka* and sought Rāma's Ṣaraṇu*. The Vānaras warned Rāma not to trust anyone from the enemy camp and that he should kill Vibhīshaṇa. However, Rāma was steadfast that someone who sought his Ṣaraṇu must not be harmed. Vibhīshaṇa advised Rāma to pray to Samudra (*Sanskrit for 'ocean', a personification of the sea*) in order to be able to cross the ocean. Rāma prayed to Samudra but the sea did not give way immediately. Annoyed at being thus ignored, Rāma shot an arrow at Samudra. Samudra then appeared, greeted Rāma with a Namaskāra and said he is a friend of Rāma's father (see **Daṣaratha**) and advised Rāma to have Nala (*a Vānara warrior in Sugrīva's army; son of Viṣvakarma**) build a bridge across the sea. Nala proceeded with the construction of the bridge with the help of all the Vānaras who hauled the rocks for the bridge. When the bridge was completed, Rāma crossed the ocean with the Vānara army and entered Lanka.

Rāvaṇa's spies came to learn the invaders' plans. As the Vānaras were about to kill the spies, Rāma had them released. Rāma sent Angada as an emissary to Rāvaṇa with a message that he should return Sīta to Him. Rāvaṇa, of course, refused. The war then began. At first, many Asuras and their commanders died. Then Indrajit (*Sanskrit for "he who defeated Indra", son of Rāvaṇa*) performed a Hōma*, and came to the battlefield against Rāma and Lakshmaṇa in a golden chariot that emerged from the sacred fire of the Hōma. He fired a Nāgāstra (*a "serpent weapon"; Astras*

*were not mere arrows – each had a particular special power. A Nāgāstra, for instance, would release serpents which would bind the attacked person as with ropes, like boa constrictors*) at them. The weapon caused both Rāma and Lakshmaṇa to fall down unconscious. Rāma recovered after a while, but Lakshmaṇa remained unconscious. As Rāma remained uncertain whether his brother would regain consciousness or not, Nārada appeared on the scene and advised Rāma to pray to Garutmanta* (*a natural enemy of serpents*). When Rāma prayed to Garutmanta, Lakshmaṇa was released from the serpents that had him in their grip. Lakshmaṇa rose, and he and Rāma re-entered the fray. They proceeded to methodically kill the enemy including Indrajit.

Rāvaṇa then joined the battle. Hit by an arrow from Rāvaṇa, Lakshmaṇa again lost consciousness. Rāma sent Hanumān to bring Sanjīvani (*a herb with the power to revive the unconscious and in one variety, the dead*). As Hanumān was bringing it, its luster confused Rāma into thinking that the Sun was rising and that it was too late for Lakshmaṇa to be revived. Rāma was very sad. Then Hanumān appeared and revived Lakshmaṇa with the Sanjīvani he brought. However hard they fought against Rāvaṇa, it did not appear that he could be defeated. When one of his ten heads was severed, another would grow in its place immediately. If an arm was cut off, another would grow. As Rāma began to lose hope that he could overcome Rāvaṇa, Vibhīshaṇa revealed his brother's secret vulnerability. Rāvaṇa had a pot of Amṛtam* at his navel. The Amṛtam was causing his heads and limbs to be continually replenished. Vibhīshaṇa advised that his brother should be hit in his stomach. Rāma followed Vibhīshaṇa's suggestion and

killed Rāvaṇa by firing an arrow at his navel.

As soon as Rāvaṇa was killed, Indra*, Brahma and other Dēvas arrived and praised Rāma. Sīta was brought out of captivity to Rāma. She saluted her husband with a Namaskāra. Rāma then said that he killed Rāvaṇa only to restore his family's reputation but could not accept Sīta as his wife after she had been in Rāvaṇa's house for a long time, and she was free to go where she wished. Sīta asked that her chastity be put to a test (*a test by fire*). A fire was prepared. Sīta joined her palms and entered the fire saying that the fire would not hurt her if she was faithful to her husband. She stood in the middle of the fire, and it was as if she was surrounded by flowers. Agni (*the God of Fire*) himself appeared, and affirmed that Sīta was pure. Rāma then accepted her. (*The principle was that the king ruled only with the consent of the governed, and that the king and his family not only had to be pure but must be seen to be pure. Like many other ancient stories, the principle being illustrated is the point, not the factual details or the apparent misogyny.*)

Rāma then crowned Vibhīshaṇa as the king of Lanka, and accompanied by Sīta, left for Ayōdhya on the flying vehicle, Pushpaka. The population of Ayōdhya were jubilant to see their beloved Rāma and Sīta return from their forest exile. Rāma was immediately coronated. The kingdom was flourishing, with law-abiding, happy people. Rāma and Sīta were happy together. Sīta became pregnant. One day Rāma asked Sīta to wish for something that He should do for her. She told Him that she would like to spend some time with the wives of Sages on the banks of the river Ganga. He promised her that he would arrange for her trip the next

day. He then went to the Sabha *(court*). There he noticed an official named Bhadra and asked him "Bhadra! What are the citizens saying about me?" Bhadra answered "Sire! What can the people be saying about the great hero who had killed the evil Rāvaṇa, other than praising Him?" Rāma was not satisfied with the answer (*He took very seriously the principle that even a divinely-ordained monarch must rule with the consent of the governed*) and insisted "What are they saying about me and Sīta?" Bhadra reluctantly admitted that he heard some people complaining that it was unseemly that Rāma was living with a wife that had been in Rāvaṇa's custody for a long time.

Rāma went into the city that night in disguise and heard a washerman berating his wife and accusing her of being unfaithful to him, saying "I am not naive like Rāma to take back a wife that had been in another man's house. I do not want you." Rāma was horrified and saddened to discover that even one of his citizens had such a poor opinion of Himself and Sīta.

Right away, Rāma summoned his brothers; they became concerned that he looked so sad. Rāma narrated his finding that people were accusing their king of being a cuckold. Then, addressing Lakshmaṇa, Rāma said "Take Sīta to the forest and leave her there tomorrow. She expressed a wish to spend some time with the wives of the Sages. Pretend that that is where you are taking her. Do not argue with me on this matter." The brothers were lamenting the fact that Sīta, the ideal wife, is facing such hardship. Lakshmaṇa was fully aware that Sīta was a Pativrata* and also that Rāma knew this as well. But he did understand that Rāma was abandoning the love of his life because of a mere

allegation of infidelity. Hiding his sorrow at what he was being forced to do, he carried out his king's order, drove Sīta to the forest and returned alone, leaving her there. (*The Ṣāpas, one received by Rāma from Vāli's widow Tāra and the one he received as Vishṇu from Bhṛgu, took effect at this time*)

One day, while Rāma was holding court, an old Brahmin couple came to the court and placing their dead baby in front of him, cried "O king! How can such an atrocity occur under your rule? Why should such an infant die?" Rāma, realizing that the reason for the infant's death was the Tapas* being performed by a Ṣūdra* man, sought out a Ṣūdra ascetic named Ṣambuka and killed him as the ascetic was preparing to go to heaven in his body. Then Indra and other Dēvas came and offered to give Rāma a boon of his choosing. Rāma requested them to restore life to the dead Brahmin infant. They revived him, honouring Rāma's request. (*The story is used to illustrate that Rāma's rule, Rāmarājya, being pure and moral, would not allow calamities such as infant death.*)

As Rāma was on his way back after killing Ṣambuka, a vulture and an owl (*both articulate*) confronted him. The vulture said to him "O king! This owl occupied the nest I built and is refusing to leave. Please eject him." The owl made an identical claim. Rāma summoned his counselors and asked them to determine whose claim was true. The owl told them that he built the nest at the time the tree was born, the vulture countered that he built the nest at the time the earth itself was born. The counselors told Rāma that in their opinion, the vulture was lying. Rāma said he concurred with their opinion. As he was about to slay the vulture, Ākāṣavāṇi* declared "Do not kill him. Just lay your hand on the vulture's

body." As Rāma did so, the vulture turned into a man, told Rāma that his name was Brahmadatta and related his story. Rāma then visited Sage Agastya's Āṣram. Agastya received Rāma with the respect due a king and offered him ornaments as gifts. Rāma said "Am I not one who should give gifts, not take them? Tell me if this is right." Agastya assured him that it was proper for a king to accept gifts and cited the example of Kshupa, gave Rāma a jewel given to him by a king named Ṣvēta, and related the story of how the forest named Danḍaka came to be.

Rāma, on his return to Ayōdhya, planned to perform the Aṣvamēdha Yāga*. His counselors and the Munis encouraged him. Rāma invited all the Munis in the realm and performed the Yāga. Sage Vālmīki (*who gave refuge to Sīta in his Āṣram where she gave birth to twin sons Kuṣa and Lava and was raising them there*) was one of the many Sages who came along with his disciples Kuṣa and Lava. During the Yāga, Vālmīki had Kuṣa and Lava sing the Rāmāyaṇa. Amazed at the musical ability of the young boys, Rāma asked them whose sons they were. They told him that they were the sons of Ṣrī Rāma. Rāma recognised that they resembled Sīta and having already heard that Sīta had given birth to twin boys, realized that they were probably His sons. The thought of Sīta made Him reflect on the fact that knowing Sīta was pure and virtuous, He still had to abandon Her because the lowliest of his subjects had cast aspersions on Her. Vālmīki realized what was going through Rāma's mind, revealed that Sīta was at the banks of the Gōmati river and suggested that she be brought home. Rāma's youngest brother Ṣatrughna went and brought her. Vālmīki firmly attested that Sīta was of pure character. But Rāma asked that

Sīta Herself should testify to the fact. Sīta stood in front of Rāma and with folded hands, said "If I had always trusted Rāma's lotus feet and if I had known no man but Rāma, Bhūdēvi (*the Goddess Earth*) should open up and take me." The earth immediately opened up and Nāga* women came up from Nāga Lōka (*netherworld of Nāgas*) and carried Sīta to their world on a diamond-encrusted throne.

Rāma was saddened by the loss of Sīta and pined for her. Wanting to see her, he raised his bow, preparing to rend the earth with his arrow. Lord Brahma then appeared and said "O Rāma! Do you regard yourself as an ordinary mortal man? You are the king of all of us. Sīta was Goddess Lakshmi Herself. Please calm down. If you are angry and upset, the worlds cannot survive." Vālmīki also entreated him to complete the Yāga. Rāma composed himself and completed the Yāga.

One day, while Rāma was holding court, Sage Gārgya came to Rāma and brought him a message from King Kēkaya (*father of Queen Kaikēyi and Bharata's grandfather*) that Gandharvas* including the sons of Ṣailūsha, were harassing his kingdom. Rāma directed Bharata to take along his sons Daksha and Pushkara, kill the Gandharvas and enthrone his sons. The western regions of the empire were given to the sons of Lakshmaṇa to rule. Bharata returned to Ayōdhya after installing his sons on the throne of his grandfather's kingdom.

Another day, while Rāma was holding court, Yama (*the God of Death*) arrived, disguised as a Brahmin and said "O king! I have to speak with you. No one else should listen to our conversation. Send every one out. I will tell you what I have to tell you only if

you vow to cut off the head of any one who intrudes on our conversation." Rāma agreed (*though otherwise omnipotent, kings always deferred to Munis and Brahmins*) and directed Lakshmaṇa to stand guard outside the door, and not allow anyone in. Lakshmaṇa went outside. Then the Brahmin said "O Rāma! I am Yama and you are Lord Vishṇu. You have been in this incarnation for eleven thousand years. Evil beings such as Rāvaṇa have been destroyed. Therefore, it is time for you to end this incarnation." As he was saying this, Lakshmaṇa entered the room. Yama disappeared. Rāma was overcome with grief at the realization that, in accordance with the vow Yama made him take, he now had to behead his dear brother who gave up princely luxuries and chose to spend fourteen grueling years with him in the forest. Unable to come to grips with the terrible dilemma, he asked the Munis what he should do. They told him that he cannot violate his vow even though it meant losing Lakshmaṇa. They suggested though, that banishment from the city was equivalent to the death punishment. Lakshmaṇa left the city and drowning himself in the Sarayu river, attained Mukti*. Separation from Lakshmaṇa was also unbearable to Rāma. He wanted to hand over the kingdom to his sons and go with Lakshmaṇa. He then summoned his other brothers and all of them submerged themselves in the Sarayu river, and thus ended the Rāma Avatāra. *Rāmāyaṇa; Uttara Rāmāyaṇa; Vichitra Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ramaṇa** – One of the Vasus, also known as Sōma. He was the son of a Vasu named Dhara. *Matsya Purāṇa; Mahā Bhārata*

**Ramaṇvanta** – Eldest son of Jamadagni. His father ordered him to kill his mother Rēṇuka but he refused. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Rāmāyaṇa** – The first literary work. The author was Sage Vālmīki. Once, Vālmīki, while returning along with his disciples from a bath in the river, saw a hunter kill one heron out of a pair. The sight saddened Vālmīki. He gave a Ṣāpa* to the hunter, saying "O! Hunter! Your reputation shall be ruined because of this action." However simple the words were, they came out as a Ṣlōka (*Sanskrit poem*) when uttered by Vālmīki. The meaning of the words also indicated the story of Lord Rāma. His disciples including Bharadvāja were stunned by the spontaneous utterance of words of such great import. Just then, Sage Nārada arrived on the scene and related the complete story of Rāma to Vālmīki. Vālmīki set the story of Rāma to poetic meter. It became the magnum opus named Rāmāyaṇa. Vālmīki later taught it to Lava and Kuṣa (*Rāma's twin sons*) and made them sing it in the presence of Rāma (*before they learnt He was their father*). *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Rambha I** – An Apsara*, reputed to be the most beautiful woman among the Dēvas. She had a special fondness for Nalakūbara (*son of Kubēra, the God of Wealth*). One day, as Rambha was on her way to the palace of Nalakūbara, the Asura* Rāvaṇa assaulted her. She somehow freed herself from his grip and informed her lover of Rāvaṇa's misdeed. Nalakūbara gave Rāvaṇa a Ṣāpa* that his head would explode if he touched a Para Strī (*another's wife; it is the Hindu concept that as soon as a woman is married, she is like a sister or mother, depending on their age relative to hers, to all men other than her husband*).

Once, Sage Viṣvāmitra, desirous of attaining the position of Brahmarshi (*highest in the hierarchy of Ṛshis*), was performing

intense Tapas*. The Dēvas sent Rambha to disrupt the Tapas. She approached the Sage hesitantly, fearful of his wrath. Viṣvāmitra, noticing that she came with the intent of disrupting his Tapas, gave her a Ṣāpa that she would be a rock for ten thousand years. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Rambha II** – An Asura*. Brother of Karambha. The two of them were harassing the Dēvas. Afraid of retaliation by the Dēvas, Karambha hid under water. He was killed there. Rambha prayed to Lord Ṣiva for a son who could defeat the Dēvas. Ṣiva appeared to him and gave the requested boon.

Rambha was performing Tapas* for a very long time directed towards Ṣiva, but Ṣiva did not materialize. In frustration, Rambha prepared to cut his head off as a sacrifice. Agni (*the God of Fire*) then asked him "What can you achieve by losing your life? Do you not know that suicide is a sin? What do you want?" Rambha asked for a son who could defeat the Dēvas. Agni told him that a son of the same species as the one with which he has sex will be born to him. On his way home from Tapas, Rambha saw a female buffalo. He had sex with her resulting in a son named Mahisha. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Rambha III** – Son of Vivimṣati and father of Khaninētra. *Bhāgavata*

**Ramya** – Son of Āgnīdhra. The country he ruled came to be known as Ramyakavarsha. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Rantidēva** – Son of Sankṛti. Once, as he was preparing to perform a Yāga, some cows came and spoke in human voices, and said "O king! Sacrifice us in your Yāga." When he was hesitant to

accede to their request, they spoke again, saying "We were sent here because we were looking for a knowledgable person. You will acquire Puṇya* by doing as we ask." Rantidēva agreed to comply with their request but stipulated that even if one of the cows is unsure of wanting to be sacrificed, he will stop the Yāga. The cows sacrificed in his Yāga reached Gō Lōka (*Sanskrit for 'world of cows', meaning cow heaven*). The cows' blood flowed as a river. The river was named Charmaṇvati. After many cows were sacrificed, one cow said, in cow language, to her calf "Cruel people are here and they will kill us." Rantidēva, who knew cow language, ended the Yāga on hearing this.

Rantidēva had the habit of giving away all his possessions. As a result of his charity, he was left without even food. After starving for forty days, he acquired a small amount of rice but before he could eat it, a guest arrived. Rantidēva gave him half of the rice. Then came a Ṣūdra*, an outcast, and a dog. Rantidēva gave them the rest of the rice. Lord Brahma and other Dēvas appeared and told Rantidēva that they were the unexpected visitors to whom Rantidēva gave away the little food he obtained after his long fast. Appreciating his hospitality which extended even to animals, they asked him to choose boons. Rantidēva asked only that he remain a devotee of Lord Vishṇu. *Mahā Bhārata; Bhāgavata*

**Rāshṭra** – Son of Kāṣi and father of Dīrghatapa. *Bhāgavata*

**Rathantari** – Wife of Ilala. Mother of Dushyanta (*Progenitor of the Kaurava and Pāṇḍava dynasties*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Rathītara** – Son of King Pṛshadaṣva. He was childless. His wife had Brahmin Kshētraja* sons possessing aspects of Lord Brahma

named Āngirasas by a Muni named Angirasa (*It was believed that a man who died with no sons would not be able to go to heaven and that sons born to one's wife by a holy person or a divine one can save one from this fate*). *Bhāgavata*

**Rati I** – She was born from the sweat on the body of Daksha. Daksha gave her to Manmatha (*the God of Love, his name means "he who churns the mind"*) in marriage. She saw her husband incinerated by Lord Ṣiva opening His third eye, and was crying inconsolably. The Dēvas comforted her and informed her that Manmatha will be reborn as Pradyumna, son of Lord Kṛshṇa. Sage Nārada revealed to her where Pradyumna will be (*Nārada, with knowledge of past, present and future, knew that Pradyumna would go to the Asura* Ṣambara to kill him*). Rati took the name Māyāvati and took a position as a servant in the home of Ṣambara. *Bhāgavata*

**Rati II** – Wife of Prajāpati. Mother of Nahusha. *Bhagavata*

**Ratnamāla** – Daughter of the Asura* Bali (*grandson of Prahlāda, an Asura who was a devotee of Lord Vishṇu*). She saw Vāmana (*Lord Vishṇu's fifth incarnation*) during the Yāga her father was performing. She felt motherly love for the boy and wondered how great it would make her feel if he was to suckle at her breasts. Lord Kṛshṇa (*the ninth incarnation of Vishṇu*) was aware of her wish. She was Pūtaki in her next life (*Pūtaki was an Asura woman who was sent by Kamsa to find his nephew Kṛshṇa and kill Him by giving Him her poisonous breast milk*). *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Rauchya** – A Manu*. Son of Ruchi. His mother was Mālini, daughter of the Apsara* Pramōchana. Rauchya became a Manu as

was foretold to Ruchi by his ancestors. One named Bṛhaspati was Indra* during his Manvantara (*reign as Manu*). His sons including Chitrasēna, Dṛḍha, and Suratha ruled as kings. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Raudrāṣva** – Son of Samyāti. He and the Apsara* Ghṛtāchi had sons named Ṛtēpu, Kakshēpu, Sthalēpu, Vratēpu, and Vanēpu. *Bhāgavata*

**Rauhiṇa** – A great tree. Once as Garutmanta* was carrying away an elephant and a tortoise, the tree invited him to rest on its branches. As soon as Garutmanta landed on one of its branches, the branch broke. Realizing that the broken branch was home to Vālakhilyas (*miniature sons of Lord Brahma; they are about the size of a man's thumb*), Garutmanta held the branch in his beak to prevent injury to the tiny beings. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Rāvaṇa** – Eldest son of Viṣravasu (*Lord Brahma's grandson*) and Kaikasi, daughter of Sumāli. Once, Kaikasi approached her husband for sex, hoping to bear children, at sunset (*sex was supposed to be restricted to night time*). Viṣravasu told his wife that, as a result of having sex at an inappropriate time, the children born to her would be Asuras*. Rāvaṇa had younger brothers named Kumbhakarṇa and Vibhīshaṇa and a younger sister named Ṣūrpaṇakha. As Rāvaṇa was being born, it rained blood. A vulture's cry was heard. Viṣravasu named his first-born Daṣagrīva (*Sanskrit for "with ten necks", signifying he had ten heads. Other synonyms are Daṣakanṭha and Daṣamukha*). *Uttara Ramayana*

Once, Kubēra (*the God of Wealth, Viṣravasu's nephew*) sent three women, Pushpōtkaṭa, Mālini, and Pāka to Viṣravasu. Rāvaṇa

and Kumbhakarṇa were born to Pushpōtkaṭa, Vibhīshaṇa to Mālini, and Khara and Ṣūrpaṇakha to Pāka. *Mahā Bhārata*

Rāvaṇa was born with ten heads. Once, while having sex with Kaikasi, Viṣravasu asked her "How many times did you have a menstrual period? I will give you that many sons." She said "I had eleven periods, but I do not want that many sons. Please give me one son and one daughter." He acceded to her request, but because his word was inviolable, a son with ten heads and a daughter were born to her.

There was another reason why Rāvaṇa had ten heads. As Lord Vishṇu was killing the Asura Hiraṇyakaṣipu in his incarnation as Narasimha (*His fourth incarnation, as a hybrid of lion and man*), the Asura rebuked Him, saying "You deceived me by emerging from a pillar and you needed twenty nails (*lion's claws*) to kill me. What kind of valour is this?" Narasimha countered that in Hiraṇyakaṣipu's next life, "I will give you twenty arms and ten heads and I will come as an ordinary human and kill you." *Vichitra Rāmāyaṇa*

Once, Rāvaṇa's half-brother Kubēra was travelling in his flying vehicle Pushpaka. Kaikasi, overcome by jealousy at Kubēra's good fortune, told her son Rāvaṇa to take the vehicle away from Kubēra. Rāvaṇa, saying "Why that vehicle? I will acquire a better one", started performing intense Tapas* directed towards Lord Brahma (*his great-grandfather*). He stood balanced on one toe and facing Sūrya (*the Sun God*) directly. While thus performing Tapas, Rāvaṇa was cutting off one of his heads every ten thousand years and throwing it in the Hōma* fire. The intensity of his Tapas caused turmoil in all the worlds and sheer panic in the Dēvas. As

he prepared to sacrifice his tenth (*last*) head, Brahma appeared to him and offered him boons of his choice. Rāvaṇa said "I have no fear of humans. Make me invulnerable to death by Dēvas, Yakshas (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers similar to those of Asuras*) and Gandharvas*. Brahma granted the boon. Rāvaṇa ended his Tapas and returned home. His friend Sumāli approached Rāvaṇa and said "We used to live in Lanka*. The Dēvas drove us out of there and we have been forced to live in Rasātala (*a netherworld*). Your half-brother Kubēra now rules Lanka. Please somehow take Lanka from him." Rāvaṇa sent Sumāli's son Prahasta as an envoy to his brother with a message that he should hand Lanka over to him and leave. Kubēra informed his (*and Rāvaṇa's*) father of Rāvaṇa's demand and following the father's advice, left Lanka. After the Asuras returned to Lanka, Rāvaṇa became king of Lanka.

Rāvaṇa went hunting one day. He saw Maya* and his daughter Mandōdari. Entranced by her beauty, Rāvaṇa approached them and inquired as to who they were. He introduced himself as the ruler of Lanka and a bachelor. Maya gave his daughter to Rāvaṇa in marriage. Sons named Mēghanātha (*Indrajit, another name for him, was earned by defeating Indra*), Dēvāntaka (*literally 'he who eliminates Dēvas'*), Narāntaka (*eliminates humans*), Mahāpārṣva, and Aksha were born to the couple.

After Rāvaṇa's triumphant return home, Kubēra sent an emissary to him, with the message "Rāvaṇa! The people of the world resent your evil deeds. Your violations of good behaviour are unbearable. Your cruelty and jealosy will bring you great harm." Angered by the message, Rāvaṇa killed the emissary and invaded the city of

Alaka (*Kubēra's abode*). Rāvaṇa's army fought and defeated Kubēra's army, which ran away. Kubēra himself then came to battle Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa, using multiple disguises with his shape-shifting dark magic, defeated Kubēra, kicked him out of his vehicle Pushpaka and headed towards Kailāsa (*Rāvaṇa, like many other Asuras who hated Lord Vishṇu, was a great devotee of Lord Ṣiva*) in it.

After travelling for a while, Pushpaka stopped near Kailāsa. As a puzzled Rāvaṇa sat wondering what could have caused the vehicle to stop, Nandi (*articulate bull and Lord Ṣiva's head of security*) came to Rāvaṇa and explained that Ṣiva was engaged in love-making with His Consort and must not be disturbed. Rāvaṇa dismounted from Pushpaka and seeing Nandi (*who assumed the form of a monkey*), laughed at him. Nandi, angered by Rāvaṇa's ridicule, gave him a Ṣāpa* that because he laughed at a monkey-face, his family and dynasty will be destroyed by Vānaras*. Enraged by this, Rāvaṇa, shouting insults at Nandi and Ṣiva, lifted the entire Kailāsa mountain and swirled it as if it was a ball. Terrified by the shaking of the Mountain, Pārvati hugged Ṣiva tightly. Recognizing the disturbance as the work of Rāvaṇa and wanting to hand him a little humiliation before granting him an audience, Ṣiva pressed the mountain with His big toe. Rāvaṇa's hands were stuck beneath the mountain and crushed. Rāvaṇa screamed (*Rāva is Sanskrit for a loud sound*) from the pain making a thunderous sound that shook the whole world. Rāvaṇa, known until then as Daṣakanṭha (*one with ten necks*), thus acquired the better-known name. Mārīcha and other Asuras came recognizing the scream and advised Rāvaṇa to pray to Ṣiva and

said that Ṣiva will be pleased and release Rāvaṇa's hands. Ṣiva then appeared (*Rāvaṇa's hands were freed when Ṣiva took the pressure off the mountain*). Rāvaṇa requested as boons a sword named Chandrahāsa and unlimited life. Ṣiva granted both but stipulated that both will return to Him if Rāvaṇa engaged in immoral behaviour.

On his way back from Kailāsa, Rāvaṇa encountered a woman named Vēdavati and asked her who she was. She said she was performing Tapas directed towards Lord Vishṇu. Rāvaṇa said to her "Is Vishṇu in any way greater than me? I am greater than him, marry me." In a fit of lust, intending to kiss her, he grabbed her braided hair and pulled. Vēdavati, her eyes blazing with anger, said "I answered you just to be polite, even though I knew you to be evil. I cannot bear to remain in this body that was sullied by your touch. If I am faithful in my devotion to Hari (*one of Lord Vishṇu's more popular other names*), I will be reborn as an Ayōnija (*without passing through a birth canal*), marry Lord Vishṇu, and be the instrument of the destruction of your dynasty." So saying, she created a fire by the power of Yōga and immolated herself.

Flying away from that encounter on the Pushpaka, Rāvaṇa noticed smoke on the ground. Curious as to the source of the smoke, he descended to the ground and saw that a king named Marut was performing a Yāga. He asked them to give him a share of the Havya*, or fight a battle with him. The Brahmins officiating at the Yāga advised the king that the one performing a Yāga should not fight while the Yāga was in progress. Rāvaṇa then tortured the Brahmins and desecrated the holy fire. The Dēvas (*who are sustained by the fruits of Yāgas*) came and took their share of the

Havya, disguised as various animals.

Rāvaṇa commenced a campaign of wars against other kings. Most kings were terrified of him and reluctant to take him on. One king, Anaraṇya, did fight him and after being defeated, rather than going quietly, said to him "This victory is not due to your prowess. There is God who is going to defeat you." Angered at these insults, Rāvaṇa smashed Anaraṇya's head into pieces.

Sage Nārada called on Rāvaṇa and told him that Lord Vishṇu will be born as the son of Kausalya and kill him. On hearing this prediction, Rāvaṇa abducted Kausalya and locked her in a box at the bottom of the ocean. Daṣaratha, on his way to Kōsala (*in response to the invitation by Kausalya's father*) to marry Kausalya, was accidentally swept away by a flooded river and found himself in the same box. Rāvaṇa, realizing what had happened, prepared to kill Kausalya in order to prevent Lord Vishṇu's birth as her son. Sage Nārada, arriving just in time, remonstrated that killing a woman is unmanly. Rāvaṇa refrained from killing her and instead, let her go. After killing Anaraṇya, he went to the city of Māhishmati (see **Agni**), and sent a message to its ruler, Kārtavīryārjuna, challenging him to a fight. Kārtavīryārjuna not only obliged, but defeated and imprisoned Rāvaṇa. Kārtavīryārjuna released Rāvaṇa only when Pulastya begged him to let his grandson go.

Still itching for a fight, Rāvaṇa next sought out Vāli, having heard that the Vānara was very strong. He asked Tāru (*who happens to be Vāli's father-in-law*) where he could find Vāli. When Tāru opined that he was not strong enough to fight Vāli, Rāvaṇa beat the old man and almost killed him. He then proceeded

south, encountered Vāli and challenged him to a fight. Vāli administered a sound thrashing of Rāvaṇa which brought him to his senses at least temporarily, and he made friends with Vāli. After leaving Vāli, Rāvaṇa ran into Sage Nārada again, who said "You have been defeating only humans. Where is the prestige in that? You should target the Dēvas and among them Yama, who is especially vain. Defeat him." Nārada then rushed to Yama's place before Rāvaṇa could get there, and told him "Rāvaṇa, supremely arrogant, is about to challenge you to a fight. Beat his pride out of him." Soon, Rāvaṇa reached Yamalōka (*Yama's abode, hell*) and started attacking Yama's soldiers and security personnel. Yama joined the fray. A concerned Lord Brahma intervened with Yama and told him "I had given Rāvaṇa a boon of longevity. Please do not make a liar of me." Respecting Brahma's wishes, Yama spared Rāvaṇa's life.

Rāvaṇa proceeded from Yamalōka to Rasātala (*a netherworld in which Asuras live*). There, in the city of Bhōgavati, he picked a fight with Asuras named Nivātakavachas. Lord Brahma came and made peace between them. Rāvaṇa stayed there a while, and then went to the city of Aṣmapura and challenged Asuras named Kālakēyas (*sons of Marīchi by Kālaka*) to battle, and defeated them. As they were retreating in defeat, Vidyujjihva, husband of Ṣūrpaṇakha (*Rāvaṇa's sister*) tried to rally them, offering his help. Thinking he was just one of the Kālakēyas, Rāvaṇa killed him. From there, Rāvaṇa sallied forth to another netherworld, Pātāḷa, intending to take on and defeat Bali, the Asura emperor. He saw a luminous person at the first gate of Pātāḷa and said to him "I came to defeat Bali. Where is he? Show me." He was told to proceed

past the seventh gate. Rāvaṇa found Bali. Bali greeted Rāvaṇa affectionately, sat him down on his lap and asked "Child! What is the purpose of your visit?" Unable to state his intent in the face of Bali's kindness, Rāvaṇa said "I have heard that Hari (*one of Vishṇu's many names*) perpetrated a massive fraud on you. Show me where he hides and I will treat him the way he treated you." Bali told Rāvaṇa that Hari was at the first gate and extolled the greatness of Hari. *Bhāgavata*

Rāvaṇa went on from there to the Mēru mountain (*in Hindu mythology, this mountain is the tallest in the world and is at the northern extremity; it is the abode of the Dēvas*) and sent a message to Sūrya (*the Sun God*) challenging him to war. Sūrya sent a reply that he is unavailable. Sage Parvata (*nephew of Sage Nārada*) visited Rāvaṇa and gave him a discourse on people who perform good and righteous deeds and the spiritual power they gain thereby. Rāvaṇa next sought out and defeated King Māndhāta in battle. Brahma came and arranged a truce between them. Rāvaṇa's next target was Chandra (*the Moon God*). Brahma again intervened and stopped Rāvaṇa from harming Chandra. Rāvaṇa also set about abducting and imprisoning women. The women he thus harassed gave him a Ṣāpa that a woman would be the root of the destruction of him and his dynasty.

Rāvaṇa returned home to Lanka. His brother Vibhīshaṇa criticized him for molesting women. Vibhīshaṇa also informed Rāvaṇa that an Asura named Madhu came to Lanka during Rāvaṇa's absence and abducted their cousin sister Kumbhīnasa. His sister Ṣūrpaṇakha was grief-stricken by the death of her husband Vidyujjihva at her brother's hands. Rāvaṇa consoled her

and sent her to the Danḍaka forest where their cousins Khara and Dūshaṇa would provide her all the creature comforts. Then, upset by the arrogance of Madhu, he went to him intending to kill him. His cousin greeted him and begged him not to kill Madhu because even though he took her against her will, he is her husband now. Rāvaṇa acceded to her request and befriended Madhu. Rāvaṇa, accompanied by his new friend and brother-in-law, targeted Indra.

On the way, Rāvaṇa saw and raped the Apsara* Rambha who was going to a rendezvous with her lover Nalakūbara (*son of Kubēra, God of Wealth*). When Rambha tearfully informed Nalakūbara of Rāvaṇa's assault on her, Nalakūbara gave Rāvaṇa a Ṣāpa that if Rāvaṇa tried to have sex with any woman against her will, his heads will explode. Rāvaṇa learnt of the Ṣāpa. Rāvaṇa reached Indra Lōka (*Indra's world, Swarga or heaven*), battled and defeated the Dēvas, who ran away. Indra then joined the battle and defeated Rāvaṇa. Then Rāvaṇa's son Mēghanātha fought Indra ferociously and defeated him by employing magical abilities including invisibility (*he came to be known as Indrajit, Sanskrit for 'he who defeated Indra'*). Indrajit rescued his father and bound Indra.

Rāvaṇa proceeded from there along a forest trail. He saw a great man bathed in brilliant light, performing Tapas. Suspecting him to be a sorcerer, Rāvaṇa rained fire on him. The great man was Sage Kapila (*actually, a form of Lord Vishṇu*). Kapila hit Rāvaṇa once with his clenched fist, and went inside a nearby cave. Rāvaṇa fainted on being hit and regaining consciousness after a while, realized that the man who hit him went into the cave, and followed him into the cave. As soon as he saw Kapila, he started shaking

uncontrollably. With trepidation and respect, he asked "Sir! Who are you?" Kapila just opened his mouth. In it, Rāvaṇa saw the entire universe. Rāvaṇa, realizing that it is probably Lord Vishṇu, visited Sanatkumāra (*a perpetually young mind-born son of Lord Brahma*) and learned from him about the greatness of Lord Vishṇu.

As Rāvaṇa continued his journey, he encountered Sage Nārada. Rāvaṇa asked him where he could find someone worthy of fighting. Nārada advised him to go to Ṣvētadwīpa (*Sanskrit for 'white island'*). Rāvaṇa climbed aboard the Pushpaka and was flying toward the island. After a while, the vehicle stopped moving. Rāvaṇa disembarked and started walking. He saw only huge women everywhere, who asked him to identify himself. He told them "I am Rāvaṇa and I come here seeking someone who is a worthy opponent in a fight." One of the women, saying "Here is a curious-looking insect with ten heads", picked up Rāvaṇa in her palm and handed him to another woman. The women kept passing Rāvaṇa from one to another. Rāvaṇa was hurting from being squeezed in the women's fists and finally bit the hand of the woman holding him. She threw him like a ball and he landed in the ocean. He managed to reach Lanka.

Lanka, even though the abode of Asuras, was a civilized place. It contained great palaces, fountains and creature comforts in abundance. Rāvaṇa's rule of the island did not seem to be flawed in any way. Rāvaṇa first heard of Rāma and Sīta from an Asura named Anukampana, who informed him that Rāma, while wandering in the Daṇḍaka forest, had killed the Asuras Khara and Dūshaṇa.

Ṣūrpaṇakha came on the heels of Anukampana and related how two mortal men, disregarding the fact that she was the sister of the ruler of Lanka, humiliated her by cutting off her nose and ears. She then advised Rāvaṇa to abduct the wife of one of them, who is with the two men. Rāvaṇa recruited Mārīcha (*son of the female Asura Tāṭaki*) to assist him in the scheme. Mārīcha was to create a distraction and draw Rāma and Lakshmaṇa far from their cottage. Mārīcha was uncomfortable about the plan but was scared enough of Rāvaṇa that he complied. He took the form of a golden deer, made sure that Rāma and Sīta saw him and ran far away. Rāma went chasing after the golden deer. Lakshmaṇa, hearing a cry of "O Lakshmaṇa!" in Rāma's voice, went to help his brother, leaving Sīta alone in the cottage. Rāvaṇa went to the cottage disguised as a Yati (*holy mendicant*). He showed Sīta his true form, related his story and asked her to go with him and become queen of Lanka.

Sīta fainted away at the sight of Rāvaṇa's true form. Rāvaṇa picked up her unconscious body and was flying towards Lanka. Jaṭāyu (*huge articulate bird*) saw this, and challenged Rāvaṇa saying "What are you doing? Why are you carrying away the wife of Rāma?" When Rāvaṇa refused to leave Sīta, a fight ensued. Rāvaṇa cut off Jaṭāyu's wings, threw him to the ground and flew to Lanka with the unconscious Sīta in tow.

Rāvaṇa took her on a tour of his city, showing her the magnificent golden palaces with diamonds embedded in the walls, and beautiful gardens. He kept praising her and his wealth and saying that he and she deserved each other and his fabulous wealth. He asked her to leave Rāma, a mere mortal. When that approach did not win Sīta over, he tried to intimidate her into

accepting him. She defied all his attempts. He then put her in the Aṣōka garden under heavy guard of Asura women with orders to convince Sīta to become his wife.

Meanwhile, Hanumān, sent by Sugrīva on Rāma's behalf, reached Lanka. He saw Sīta and in his joy at finding her, went wild and started destroying the trees and fountains in the beautiful garden. He was harassing the guards and was eluding their attempts to capture him. Rāvaṇa ignored him at first, thinking they are just animal pranks until many people complained of Hanumān's harassment. Rāvaṇa sent some soldiers to capture Hanumān but they all died at Hanumān's hands. Indrajit did eventually capture Hanumān. Cloth rags were tied to Hanumān's tail and set on fire. Leaping from building to building, Hanumān destroyed all the palaces in Lanka with the fire set by the Asuras themselves.

Hanumān went back and informed Rāma and the others on the seashore of Sīta's situation. Rāma's army, fully war-ready, started marching to Lanka over the Sētu (*causeway*) they had built. Rāvaṇa summoned his ministers and advisors to a brain-storming session to decide how to proceed. His youngest brother, Vibhīshaṇa, suggested that Rāvaṇa should return Sīta to Rāma. The ministers, however, counseled in favour of going to war. Rāvaṇa heaped abuse on Vibhīshaṇa and banished him from Lanka. Vibhīshaṇa left Lanka and sought Ṣaraṇu* from Rāma. Rāvaṇa's spies, named Ṣuka and Sāraṇa, scouted the enemy forces and described them to Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa went to his Antahpura*, summoned a soldier named Vidyujjihva (*different from Rāvaṇa's brother-in-law*), and asked him to fix a replica of Rāma's head to a

lance, show it to Sīta and tell her "Sīta! Your husband has been killed. Look at his head. Forget him and accept Rāvaṇa as your husband." Sīta was not fooled, of course.

Rāma and his army crossed the ocean and reached the battlefield. The Asuras and Vānaras fought each other furiously. Commanders led their troops and fought along with them. Great Asura warriors including Atikāya, Mahākāya, and Indrajit were killed in the fighting. Rāvaṇa's wife, Mandōdari, begged him to stop the war. Rāvaṇa rejected her entreaties saying "If I give up the fight, it will be considered that I feared Rāma, a mere mortal. I will earn the ridicule of Indra, who will feel emboldened by my humiliation. I cannot give up." Grieving for the loss of his son and unable to contain his anger, he went to where Sīta was being held, intending to kill her to avenge the death of his son. The Asuras present said "Is it proper for someone as great as you to kill a woman? Will it not ruin your reputation?" Rāvaṇa returned to the battlefield and started raining arrows on the enemy with renewed vigor. One of the arrows hit Lakshmaṇa, who lost consciousness as a result. Rāma sent Hanumān to bring Sanjīvani (*a herb with the power to revive even the dead*) to resuscitate Lakshmaṇa. Informed of this, Rāvaṇa went to Kālanēmi (*who guards the Sanjīvani*) and told him to somehow kill Hanumān who will come there soon. Instead, Hanumān defeated Kālanēmi and brought the herb. Lakshmaṇa recovered and joined the battle again.

On the advice of Ṣukra (*Guru of the Asuras*), Rāvaṇa prepared to perform a Yāga named Pātāḷa Hōma. If he managed to complete the Yāga, Rāvaṇa would become invincible. Vibhīshaṇa informed Rāma of this secret. Angada and several other Vānaras were sent to

disrupt the Hōma. Angada dragged Rāvaṇa's wife to the Hōma site by her hair. Rāvaṇa, unable to contain his anger, left the Hōma unfinished and rescued his wife. He returned to the battle and fought fiercely, without regard to the danger to his life. Rāma began to feel that he could not defeat Rāvaṇa. When one of Rāvaṇa's heads was severed, another immediately grew in its place. When an arm was cut off, another replaced it. Then, Vibhīshaṇa revealed a secret of Rāvaṇa's vulnerabilty to Rāma. He advised Rāma to hit Rāvaṇa's navel. Rāma did as suggested. Rāvaṇa immediately died and slumped to the ground like a tree cut off at its roots. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṛbhu** – Son of Lord Brahma. *(Ṣrī Kāḷahasti Māhātmyam is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'*). Ṣrī Kāḷahasti Māhātmyam*

**Ṛbhu Maharshi** – A Ṛshi (*Sage*). Looking at a king riding an elephant, he asked, "Of these two, who is the king? Who is the elephant?" A man named Nidāgha, standing nearby, pulled Ṛbhu's head down and jumping on to the Ṛshi's back said, "The one below, like you, is the elephant; the one on top, like me, is the king." Without getting angry, Ṛbhu taught him that there is no such difference as you and me (*the essence of Advaita*). Nidāgha apologised for his bad behaviour and became Ṛbhu's disciple. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Ṛchēyu** – Father of Atisāra. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṛchi** – Wife of Āptavān and mother of Aurva. *Brahma Purāṇa*

**Ṛchīka I** – Son of Aurva (*of Bhṛgu's lineage*). Like his father, he had enormous Tapas* Ṣakti (*spiritual power*). Once he went to a king named Gādhi and asked for his daughter Satyavati's hand in

marriage. The king told him that he could marry the princess if he brought a thousand horses each with one blue ear and an all-white body, as bride-price. Ṛchīka prayed to Varuṇa (*the Rain God*), who told him that such horses will be found wherever Ṛchīka wished them to be. Ṛchīka mentally pictured them near a kingdom named Kanyākubja, north of the river Ganga. The horses showed up there. Ṛchīka gave King Gādhi the horses he desired and married his daughter Satyavati. Satyavati had great love and devotion towards her husband. Pleased by her devotion to him, Ṛchīka asked her what she would like most. Satyavati asked that a son be born to her and a son to her mother. Ṛchīka instructed that she should embrace a Mēḍi tree and her mother, a Rāvi tree. Forgetting the correct instruction, Satyavati embraced a Rāvi tree and her mother embraced the Mēḍi tree.

(*Alternate version: Ṛchīka gave Satyavati and her mother a small vessel over which he invoked different Mantras containing holy water. By mistake, Satyavati and her mother each drank the water intended for the other*.)

When he found out that his wife and her mother reversed his instruction, Ṛchīka told them that Satyavati's son, though a Brahmin, would have the characteristics of a Kshatriya (*warrior or royal caste*) and that his mother-in-law's son will have the attributes of a Brahmin. Satyavati, saddened by the prospect, requested that instead of her son, her grandson be the one with a Kshatriya nature. Ṛchīka agreed to her wish and Satyavati gave birth to Jamadagni (*father of Paraṣurāma, the fierce warrior Brahmin and sixth incarnation of Lord Vishṇu*). *Mahā Bhārata, Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Ṛchīka II** – Son of Devātithi and husband of Sudēva. Their son was Ṛksha. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Rēṇuka** – Daughter of King Prasēnajit (*also known as Rēṇu*) of the Ikshvāku dynasty and wife of Sage Jamadagni. They had sons named Ramaṇvanta, Susēshaṇa, Vasu, Viṣvāvasu, and Rāma.

One day, she went to the river to fetch water where she saw King Chitraratha and stood for a long time with romantic feelings for him. Realizing that she was tardy, and afraid of her husband's reaction, she went home with a pot of water. *Bhāgavata*

Her husband, assuming that his wife had committed adultery with Chitraratha, developed hatred for her. Intending to punish her, he summoned his sons and asked them to kill their mother. The four older sons refused to commit matricide. Rāma alone obeyed his father and killed his mother. When Jamadagni asked his son to choose a boon as a reward for his obedience, he requested that his mother be revived. Jamadagni restored her to life. A king named Kārtavīrya killed Jamadagni. As Rēṇuka prepared to immolate herself on the funeral pyre, Ākāṣavāṇi* said "Auspicious things will happen to you!" Surprised by the unexpected and puzzling words, Rēṇuka was quiet. Just then, Sage Bhṛgu (*Jamadagni's grandfather*) arrived and revived Jamadagni. However, sometime later, a son of Kārtavīrya named Ṣūra killed Jamadagni. Rēṇuka then immolated herself on her husband's funeral pyre. *Mahā Bhārata; Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Rēṇumati** – Wife of Nakula (*one of the Pānḍavas; each of the Pānḍavas had at least one wife he did not share with his brothers, in addition to Draupadi, shared by all five*). Their son was Niramitra. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Rēvati I** – A Nakshatra (*star*). A son was born to Sage Ṛtumanta during the fourth phase of this star and turned out evil. The Sage blamed Rēvati and gave her a Ṣāpa* that she would fall to earth. Rēvati fell on a mountain named Kumudagiri. A Muni named Pramucha found her and raised her as part of his family. When she was of marriageable age, he gave her in marriage to a king named Durdama. Rēvati had requested that her marriage be performed when the star Rēvati was ascendant. When he pointed out that he could not fulfill her wish because the star had fallen, Rēvati suggested that he use his spiritual power obtained by Tapas* to accomplish the task. Using his spiritual power as she suggested, the Muni re-installed Rēvati in the sky. Rēvati had a son named Raivata, who became a Manu*. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Rēvati II** – Daughter of Raivata, son of Ānarta (*also known as Rēvata*) and wife of Balarāma (*older brother of Lord Kṛshṇa*). Once, her father Raivata took her to Lord Brahma to enquire from Him who would be a suitable husband for her. Seeing that Kinnaras (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers. They have horses' heads over human bodies*) and Kimpurushas (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers. They have human heads over horses' bodies*) were performing dances, he waited for an instant before addressing his question to Brahma. Brahma told him that during the instant he waited since arriving in His world, eons had passed on earth and those who had wanted to marry his daughter as well as their descendants had passed on. Brahma advised him to give his daughter in marriage to Balarāma, who had aspects of Lord Vishṇu and was on earth then. Raivata followed Brahma's advice and performed Rēvati's marriage to Balarāma.

*Vishṇu Purāṇa; Bhāgavata*

**Ripu I** – Son of Ṣlishṭi. He and his wife Bṛhati had a son named Chākshusha Manu*. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Ripu II** – Fourth son of Yadu. *Bhāgavata*

**Ripunjaya I** – Descendant of Manu. Once upon a time, there was a severe and continuous drought for sixty years when no crops grew. All the people died of starvation. Even the king did not survive. Nāgas* and Yakshas (*semi-Divine beings with special magical powers, ruled by Kubēra, the God of Wealth*) took over the earth. Then Lord Brahma said to Ripunjaya "Go and rule the earth from the city of Kāṣi*. Your name shall be Divōdās." Ripunjaya replied that that city is overrun by Nāgas and Yakshas and that he could not govern it unless they are driven out. Brahma ordered all the non-humans to leave the city. Lord Ṣiva who was residing there with the Pramathas (*followers of Siva*) also left Kāṣi along with His followers. Ripunjaya was ruling from there under the name Divōdās. King Divōdās kept to the path of Dharma (*righteousness*) without the slightest deviation. The Dēvas were envious of Divōdās' success and planned to deceive him. Agni (*the God of Fire*), Varuṇa (*the God of Rain*) and Vāyu (*the God of Wind*) all left the city of Kāṣi. The citizens, affected by the absence of fire and wind, pleaded for the king's help. Using his Yōga (*spiritual*) power, Divōdās restored rain and fire to the city. Ṣiva, determined to evict the king and re-enter Kāṣi, sent Sūrya to do the job. Sūrya was unable to make Divōdās leave Kāṣi. Then Vināyaka (*elder son of Lord Ṣiva, the remover of obstacles; like a facilitator in modern terms*), went to Kāṣi with a false identity named

Ḍunṭhibhaṭṭāraka and caused minor deviations from Dharma but could not achieve the purpose. Ṣiva then requested Vishṇu's help. Vishṇu, disguised as a Brahmin, taught the people Buddhist principles, including disregard for the caste system. Divōdās, upset with the turn of events, asked Ḍunṭhibhaṭṭāraka what he should do. He advised Divōdās to leave the city of Kāṣi. Divōdās abdicated the kingdom, installing his son as the king and left Kāṣi. (*Kāṣi Khanḍa is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Kāṣi Khanḍa*

**Ripunjaya II** – Son of Succhāya and Ṣishṭi. His wife was Vīriṇi. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Ṛksha I** – Third wife of Ajamīḍha. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṛksha II** – Son of Ajamīḍha and father of Samvaruṇa. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṛksha III** – Son of Ṛchīka and father of Matināra. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṛkshaviraja** – The original Vānara*. Once upon a time, tears fell from Lord Brahma's eyes while he was performing Tapas* near the middle peak of the Kānchana (*golden*) mountains. Brahma caught his tears in his palm. Ṛkshaviraja, in the form of a Vānara, was born from the tears. Brahma told him to alleviate his hunger by eating the fruits of the forest. One day, the Vānara wandering in the forest, saw his image in the waters of a lake near the eastern peak of the mountains. Thinking it is another being like himself, he entered the lake. Not finding anyone in the water, Ṛkshaviraja returned to the ground and became female. Sūrya (*the Sun God*) returning from his journey that evening, and Indra* returning from a visit to Lord Brahma, both saw the female Ṛkshaviraja and both felt desire for her. As Indra's semen fell on her head and slid to her tail, Vāli was born from it. Sūrya's semen fell on her neck and

Sugrīva was born from it. The next day, Ṛkshaviraja returned to his male form. Puzzled by the transformations he had undergone, he went to Brahma and asked Him why he underwent the changes from male to female and back to male. Brahma told him, "Once, while Pārvati was bathing in the lake, some Asuras* entered the lake assuming female forms, using their shape-shifting power. Pārvati, realizing the ruse they had used, put a spell on the lake that anyone entering it will become female. However, the female form lasts only one day." Brahma then directed Ṛkshaviraja to go to Kishkindha and rule as king. Ṛkshaviraja went there with his sons Vāli and Sugrīva. After ruling as king for some time, he crowned his elder son Vāli as the king and installed Sugrīva as crown prince and went away to Tapōvana*. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Rōchana** – Indra* during the Manvantara of Swārochisha Manu*. *Bhāgavata*

**Rōchishmata** – Son of Swāyambhuva Manu*. *Bhāgavata*

**Rōhiṇi** – Daughter of Daksha Prajāpati*. One of the wives of Chandra (*the Moon God*). *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Rōhita** – Son of Emperor Hariṣchandra born as a boon from Varuṇa (*the Rain God*). Before Rōhita was born, Hariṣchandra (*famous for his truthfulness – so much so that the Sanskrit word 'Satya', meaning truth, is prefixed to his name*) uttered the words "If a son should be born to me, I will perform a Yāga using him as the sacrificial animal." As soon as Rōhita was born, Varuṇa came to Hariṣchandra to remind him of his promise. Hariṣchandra told him he will perform the sacrifice after his wife recovers from the birthing ordeal. Varuṇa went away but came back after a while.

Hariṣchandra kept putting off the Yāga with one excuse after another. Rōhita, concerned about his father's plans, left home and went to the forest. Hariṣchandra was suffering from a stomach illness, caused by Varuṇa's displeasure. Learning of his father's illness, Rōhita was returning home but on the way, he encountered Indra* (*disguised as an old Brahmin*), who said to him "Go on a holy pilgrimage and bathe in holy rivers. Good things will happen to you." As Rōhita was returning after following the advice, Indra appeared again and repeated the same advice. Five years went by like this, with Rōhita on pilgrimage. As the sixth year began, his father obtained another Brahmin boy named Ṣunaṣṣēpha as the sacrificial animal and performed the Yāga which satisfied Varuṇa who then restored Hariṣchandra to good health. Rōhita had a son named Hārīta. Rōhita was also known as Lōhitāsya. *Bhāgavata*

**Rōmaharshaṇa** – Disciple of Sage Vyāsa. Father of Sage Sūta. Sages Tayyāruṇi, Kaṣyapa, Sāvarṇi, Akṛtavraṇa, Vaiṣampāyana, and Hārīta learnt the Purāṇas from him and propagated them across all the worlds. *Bhāgavata*

**Rōmapāda I** – Son of Dharmaratha, who was the son of Diviratha. His original name was Chitraratha. He ruled the Anga Dēṣa (*kingdom*). He was a friend and ally of Daṣaratha (*father of Lord Rāma*). Because Rōmapāda was childless, Daṣaratha allowed him to adopt his daughter Ṣānta.

Rōmapāda was a generous benefactor to Brahmins, hoping that his good deeds will help him beget sons. One Brahmin, after receiving a generous donation himself, came back accompanied by his son and demanded a cow from the king. Rōmapāda laughed at what he categorized as the greed of Brahmins. The Brahmin got

angry and gave the king a Ṣāpa* that his kingdom will be drought-stricken. All the Brahmins in his kingdom left the country because they felt that the king had wronged them. Anga Dēṣa experienced severe drought. The people were suffering. Some of Rōmapāda's well-wishers suggested that there will be relief from drought if Sage Ṛṣyaṣṛnga was brought there. Ṛṣyaṣṛnga had never known any place but his own Āṣram. Rōmapāda sent some beautiful courtesans to invite him to his city. When Ṛṣyaṣṛnga came, Rōmapāda gave him his adopted daughter Ṣānta in marriage. Once Ṛṣyaṣṛnga arrived, plenty of rain fell on the kingdom. *Bhāgavata; Rāmāyaṇa*

**Rōmapāda II** – Son of Vidarbha and grandson of Jyāmagha. His son was Babhru. *Bhāgavata*

**Rōmaṣa** – A Muni. Once, he saw Arjuna, who was visiting Indra* Lōka (*Sanskrit for 'Indra's world'*) after obtaining the Pāṣupata Astra, sitting by Indra's side. He asked Indra who the human person was. Indra detailed Arjuna's past history including his previous life as a Muni named Nara. Indra then requested Rōmaṣa to go to earth and assure Dharmarāja and the rest of Arjuna's family and friends of Arjuna's well-being. Indra also asked Rōmaṣa to advise Dharmarāja to go on a pilgrimage of holy places and to accompany Arjuna on his pilgrimage. *Mahā Bhārata; Bhāgavata*

**Ṛshabha I** – (*also known as Vṛshabha*) Son of a king named Nābhi. When Nābhi performed Tapas* with the desire for a son, Lord Vishṇu Himself was born as his son. Indra*, envious of Ṛshabha's greatness, created a drought in Nābhi's kingdom.

Ṛshabha, using his spiritual power, made it rain again. Ṛshabha's wife was Jayanti. They had one hundred sons. The eldest son was named Bharata. India came to be known as Bharatavarsha, or land of Bharata, after him. In addition to Bharata, some of his other sons were named Kuṣāvarta, Ilāvarta, Brahmavarta (*Brahmāvarta*), Āryāvarta, Malayakētu, and Bhadrasēna. Nine of his sons ruled the nine (*then known*) lands. The kingdom each son ruled was named for that son. Another nine sons propagated the Supreme Being's Dharma (*righteous path*) and became great Brahmins (*illustrating the principle, enunciated by Lord Krishṇa in the Bhagavad Gīta, that caste is not determined by birth but by aptitudes and nature of the person*). *Bhāgavata*

**Ṛshabha II** – A Muni. He was performing Tapas* on a mountain named Hēmakūṭa. He was quick to anger. If anyone spoke near him, he would make it rain stones on that person. No one not rich in spiritual power would go near him. Only Dēvas and Munis who had access to Dēvas dared to visit Ṛshabha. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṛshabha III** – Son of Kuṣāgra and father of Satyahita. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṛshabha IV** – A Muni. He visited many holy places as a pilgrim. Once a king named Sumitra, while hunting, came to him, tired chasing a deer. On hearing the reason for the king's presence, he explained that desire is the cause of unhappiness and that avoiding desire is the path to happiness. He also mentioned that the same principle was taught to King Vīradyumna by a Muni named Tanu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṛshyamūka** – A mountain near Kishkindha. A Muni named Matanga was performing Tapas* there. After killing Dundubhi,

Vāli, the Vānara* king of Kishkindha, flung the Asura's body into the air. Blood from the corpse fell on Matanga. Matanga gave Vāli a Ṣāpa* that if he ever set foot on Ṛshyamūka, he will die. Sugrīva, afraid his brother Vāli would kill him, stayed here. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṛṣyaṣṛnga** – Son of a Muni named Vibhāṇḍaka. Once, while bathing in a river, Vibhāṇḍaka saw Ūrvaṣi and ejaculated. A doe was drinking river water at the time. His semen went into the doe's stomach along with the water. (See **Chitrarēkha**). The doe became pregnant. Ṛṣyaṣṛnga was the son born to the doe. Seeing with his Divya Dṛshṭi* that Ṛṣyaṣṛnga was his son, Vibhāṇḍaka brought him to his Āṣram and raised him. Ṛṣyaṣṛnga spent all his time on learning the Vēdas and performing chores around the Āṣram. He did not know of anything else and he had never even seen a woman's face. Because of his Tapas* Ṣakti (*spiritual power*), there would be good rainfall wherever he was. Knowing this, a king named Rōmapāda, whose kingdom was experiencing a severe drought, wanted to bring Ṛṣyaṣṛnga to his kingdom. Knowing also that Ṛṣyaṣṛnga would not leave the Āṣram for any reason under normal circumstances, the king hit upon the idea of sending some beautiful courtesans to him. Ṛṣyaṣṛnga was wonder-struck at the appearance of the women and naively assumed that they were sons of Munis, that the unusual food items they brought were unique fruits, and that their breasts were unusual little mountain peaks. Wondering how beautiful their Āṣram would be, he followed them. They brought him to Rōmapāda's city. As soon as he arrived there, rains fell on Rōmapāda's kingdom, Angadēṣa. Rōmapāda gave Ṣānta (*Daṣaratha's daughter adopted by*

*Rōmapāda*) to Ṛṣyaṣṛnga in marriage. Ṛṣyaṣṛnga stayed in the city for a while. Then Vibhāṇḍaka came and took Ṛṣyaṣṛnga and Ṣānta to his Āṣram.

Daṣaratha brought Ṛṣyaṣṛnga (*his son-in-law*) to Ayōdhya to be the priest for the Putra Kāmēshṭi Yāga* he planned to perform. Daṣaratha got sons as a result. *Mahā Bhārata; Hari Vamṣa; Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṛtadhwaja I** – Ṣatrujit and Ṛtadhwaja were other names for Kuvalayāṣva's father Pratardhana. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṛtadhwaja II** – Son of Ṣatrujit. He was also known as Kuvalayāṣva. *Mārkaṇḍēya Purāṇa*

**Ṛtuparṇa** – Son of Ayutāyu. King of Ayōdhya. Nala (*a king who was under the influence of a Ṣāpa* at the time*) worked for him as a cook under the name Bāhuka. He taught Nala a technique called Akshahṛdaya and learnt equestrian skills from him. *Bhāgavata*

When a second Swayamvara* for Damayanti (*wife of the exiled Nala, under a Ṣāpa at the time*) was announced, Ṛtuparṇa went to it. His son was Sarvakāma. *Mahā Bhārata; Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Ṛtuvanta** – A Muni. He was childless for a long time and a son was born to him when he was old. The son turned out to be an evil man. Ṛtuvanta, watching his son's evil deeds, became ill with worry. He went to a Muni named Garga and asked him, "O Mahātma (*Great Soul*)! I am a virtuous man and my wife is a virtuous woman. Why was our son born so evil?" Garga told him that the son was evil because he was born in the fourth phase of the Nakshatra (*star*) Rēvati. Ṛtuvanta gave Rēvati a Ṣāpa* that she would fall from the heavens because she caused him such harm.

As a result of his Ṣāpa, Rēvati fell from the field of stars to a mountain named Kumudagiri. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Ruchaka** – Son of Uṣana. He had several sons including Jyāmagha. *Bhāgavata*

**Ruchi I** – He was born from Lord Brahma's face. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Ruchi II** – A Prajāpati*. He married Ākūti, daughter of Swāyambhu Manu*. A son named Yagjna, with aspects of Lord Vishṇu and a daughter Dakshiṇa, with aspects of Goddess Lakshmi, were born to the couple. *Bhāgavata*

**Ruchi III** – Sister of the wife of King Chitraratha of Anga. She was extremely beautiful and married a Brahmin named Dēvaṣarma. Indra* lusted after her and was stalking her. Once, Dēvaṣarma planned to attend a Yāga and directed his favourite disciple Vipula to guard his home and see to it that no harm came to his wife from Indra. After a few days, Vipula used his spiritual power to enter Ruchi's body and took control of her brain. Indra came and assuming Vipula was asleep (*his body was unconscious because his soul had entered Ruchi's body*), greeted Ruchi. She (*actually Vipula controlling her brain*) replied with contempt dripping from her lips. Afterwards, Vipula returned to his own body and scolded Indra and threatened to turn him to ashes. Indra promptly disappeared. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ruchi IV** – A king. Father of Manu* named Rauchya. He remained a bachelor for a long time, causing intense grief to his Pitṛ Dēvas (*spirits of ancestors*; *it was believed that unless the male line of one's descendants was kept continuous, the souls of*

*one's ancestors cannot ascend to heaven*). They begged him to get married (*and have at least one son*). Thinking, "I am an old man. Who would give me his daughter?", Ruchi performed Tapas* directed towards Lord Brahma. When Brahma appeared, Ruchi described his need. Brahma told Ruchi that he would marry and have sons. Then Ruchi prayed to his ancestors. They appeared and told him "In the very near future, an Apsara* named Pramōchana will give you her daughter Mālini in marriage. Marry her. The son born to you and her will become a Manu." As predicted, Ruchi married Mālini, daughter of Pramōchana. Rauchya was born to them. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Ruchika** – A Sage. Father of Ṣunaṣṣēpha. A king named Ambarīsha (*whose sacrificial animal was stolen in the middle of a Yāga he was performing*) came to him and asked for one of his sons as the sacrificial animal in exchange for one hundred thousand cows. Ruchika told him that he dearly loves his oldest son and could not give him up. Ruchika's wife said she is very fond of the youngest son and could not let him go. The middle son, named Ṣunaṣṣēpha told Ambarīsha that he is willing to go as the sacrificial animal. Ambarīsha gave Ruchika the cows he promised and took Ṣunaṣṣēpha. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ruchirāṣva** – Son of Sēnājit. His son was Prāgjna. *Bhāgavata*

**Rudhika** – An Asura*. He was the one who swallowed the sons of Sage Vasishṭha including Ṣakti. *Linga Purāṇa*

**Rudra** – Once, Lord Brahma wanted to start creation, but did not know how to proceed. His failure made him very angry. In the fire of anger, Rudra (*the basis of one of the nine rasas or moods,*

*Raudra, meaning fiery anger*) emerged from His knitted eyebrows (*Rudra is one of the many names of Lord Ṣiva*). After He calmed down, Brahma brought Sati, daughter of Daksha Prajāpati*, gave her in marriage to Rudra and directed him to procreate with her.

Rudra went away to perform Tapas*, thinking that procreation was impossible otherwise. Brahma kept Sati within His body. In the meantime, several mind-born sons of Brahma married Daksha's daughters and begat children. Daksha performed a Yāga to celebrate the success of his grandchildren. Rudra was among those who attended the Yāga. However, he was not honoured. He was not given Havya*. Rudra was furious at being ignored and ill-treated. Demons and fiends emerged from his body. A weapon named Raudrāstra was launched. Daksha prayed to Lord Vishṇu for protection. Vishṇu deployed his own favourite weapon, Nārāyaṇa Astra. Alarmed at seeing Rudra and Vishṇu (*who, with Brahma, are the Trimūrti or the Hindu Trinity*) fighting each other, Brahma intervened and made peace between them. The Dēvas agreed to make Rudra eligible to receive Havya. The Dēvas then said to Rudra "We became Paṣu (*beasts*) by associating with Daksha. Please protect us." Pleased by their prayers, Rudra assured them, saying "You became Paṣu by protecting Daksha's Yāga and being allied with him. From this day forward, I will take the title of Paṣupati (*Sanskrit for 'lord of the beasts'*) and protect all animals. Brahma then gave Sati back to Rudra. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

At the beginning of time, as Lord Brahma was about to start creation, a boy was born and was crying. That boy was Rudra. Brahma asked him why he was crying. The boy asked Brahma to name him. Brahma gave him the name Bhava. The boy cried again.

Brahma gave him another name, Ṣarva. Brahma gave him several more names, Īṣāna, Paṣupati, Bhīma, Ugra, and Mahā Dēva. *Kurma Purāṇa*

Rudra divided himself into Ēkādaṣa (*eleven*) Rudras. Their names were Aja, Ēkapāda, Ahirbudnya, Twashṭa, Rudra, Ṣambhu, Hara, Tryambaka, Aparājita, Īṣāna, and Tribhuvana. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Rudrasāvarṇi** – The twelfth Manu*. During his Manvantara (*reign as Manu*), Ṛtadhāma was Indra*; Dyuti, Tapasvi, Sutapa, Tapōmūrti, Tapōdhana, Tapōnidhi, and Tapōdhṛti were the Saptarshis*. His sons named Vēdavanta, Upadēva, Mitravanta, and Mitradūra ruled as kings and established dynasties. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Rukma** – Arjuna's chariot-driver. He was given the responsibility for gathering all the materials required for Dharmarāja's Rājasūya Yāga*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Rukmabāhu** – Brother of Rukmi and Rukmiṇi. *Bhāgavata*

**Rukmalōchana** – Granddaughter of Rukmi. She was the wife of Aniruddha (*grandson of Lord Kṛshṇa*). *Aniruddha Charitra*

**Rukmaratha** – Son of King Ṣalya. He opposed Abhimanyu in the Mahā Bhārata war and was killed by him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Rukmarēkha** – Wife of King Rabhya and mother of Ēkāvaḷi. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Rukmavati** – Daughter of Rukmi. During her Swayamvara*, Pradyumna (*son of Lord Kṛshṇa*) carried her away in his chariot while all the princes were looking, and married her. *Bhāgavata*

**Rukmi** – Brother of Rukmiṇi. Their father was King Bhīshmaka. Rukmi was a friend and ally of Ṣiṣupāla. Rukmi intended to have his sister given in marriage to Ṣiṣupāla, but Kṛshṇa came uninvited and carried away Rukmiṇi. Rukmi tried to fight Kṛshṇa, who, after defeating him, was about to kill him. Rukmiṇi begged Kṛshṇa to spare her brother's life. Kṛshṇa then forcibly shaved Rukmi's head and upper lip. (*Removing someone's mustache, especially someone in the Kshatriya or warrior caste such as Rukmi, was considered a grave insult. In fact, emasculation by removal of mustache was considered worse than death.*) Rukmi, learning that it was Kṛshṇa's elder brother Balarāma who told Kṛshṇa to insult him in that fashion, was very angry with Balarāma. When the Pāṇḍavas were making preparations for war against the Kauravas, Rukmi went to Arjuna and said "Arjuna! Tell me if you are afraid to go to war; I can defeat anyone easily." Arjuna replied, dripping with sarcasm, "Rukmi! I had witnessed your prowess and how you defeated Kṛshṇa when he was abducting your sister. You need not help me. Go!" Rukmi then went to Duryōdhana and spoke with the same arrogance "If you find yourself unable to win the coming war, I can help you achieve victory." Duryōdhana also rejected him. Crestfallen, he returned home and was never invited to participate in the Mahā Bhārata war on either side.

Rukmi gave his daughter in marriage to Pradyumna (*Kṛshṇa's son; Rukmi apparently realized that he was not anywhere near Kṛshṇa's league, decided to befriend Kṛshṇa*). Balarāma attended the wedding. Remembering that his humiliation at the hands of Kṛshṇa was directed by Balarāma, Rukmi decided to try and retaliate. With that intent, he challenged Balarāma to a game of

chance. Balarāma went along and defeated Rukmi. Even though he had lost, Rukmi started to make a nuisance of himself, loudly shouting that he had won. They played three or four times with the same result. Balarāma, who could not abide lying, attacked Rukmi and after a brief fight, killed him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Rukmiṇi** – Daughter of King Bhīshmaka of the city of Kunḍina. Rukmi, Rukmadhara, and Rukmabāhu were her brothers. When she reached marriageable age, her father invited the princes of nearby lands to a Swayamvara*. Her brother Rukmi was determined to give his sister in marriage to his friend Ṣiṣupāla. Rukmiṇi did not want to marry Ṣiṣupāla. Having heard of Kṛshṇa's good looks and His character, she wished to marry Him. Uncertain as to whether Kṛshṇa would attend her Swayamvara, she sent word to Kṛshṇa requesting him to abduct her if necessary. Kṛshṇa did attend the Swayamvara and abducted her after defeating the princes who dared to stand in his way. Rukmi chased after Kṛshṇa's chariot and tried to prevent Kṛshṇa from taking away his sister. Kṛshṇa, after defeating him, was about to kill him. Rukmiṇi begged Kṛshṇa to spare her brother's life. Rukmiṇi was severely depressed, having to watch her brother being hit with arrows, left barely alive after suffering a bitter humiliation. Kṛshṇa consoled her with philosophy and lifted her mood.

Rukmiṇi was Kṛshṇa's first wife. She had ten sons, named Pradyumna, Chārudhēshṇa, Chārubhadra, Sudhēshṇa, Suchāru, Chārudēha, Chārugupta, Chāruchandra, Vichāru, and Chāru. Satyabhāma and Mitravinda were among her Sapatnis (*wives of the same man*). Of Kṛshṇa's seven other wives, Satyabhāma was particularly jealous of Rukmiṇi.

Once, Satyabhāma, as part of a Vrata*, attempted to match Kṛshṇa's weight in gold and precious stones to be donated to a Brahmin, in this case Sage Nārada. Even after she put in every valuable thing she owned, Kṛshṇa's side of the balance would not budge. Afraid of losing the beneficial results of the rite, she sought the advice of Rukmiṇi. Rukmiṇi had all of the gold and precious stones put in by Satyabhāma removed from the scale, placed a single Tulasi leaf on the balance while contemplating Kṛshṇa with devotion. The one leaf outweighed Kṛshṇa.

Learning of Kṛshṇa's passing (*ending the incarnation or Avatāra*) from Arjuna, she ended her own life by self-immolation. *Bhāgavata*

**Ruma** – Wife of the Vānara* King Sugrīva of Kishkindha (*an ally of Lord Rāma*). *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa; Padma Purāṇa*

**Ruru** – Son of Pramati and the Apsara* Ghṛtāchi. Grandson of Chyavana. He fell in love with a girl named Pramadvara and wished to marry her. One day, however, she was bitten by a serpent and lay dead. Devastated by grief at seeing his beloved dead, Ruru went to the forest and started to pray. He then heard Ākāṣavāṇi* say "If you are willing to give up half your lifespan, she will live again." Ruru agreed and Pramadvara sat up as if just waking up from sleep. Ruru married her and they lived happily.

Unwilling to forget that a serpent had bitten his beloved, Ruru nursed a grudge against serpents and kept killing every serpent he came across. One day, as he was about to strike a serpent, the serpent shape-shifted into a man and saluted him with a Namaskāra*. The man told Ruru that he was a Brahmin named Sahasrapāda and that he was turned into a serpent due to a Ṣāpa*.

He also reminded Ruru that Brahmins like him must avoid violence. Ruru took the man's advice to heart and stopped killing serpents. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ruruka** – Son of a king named Vijaya. His son was Vṛka. *Bhāgavata*

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**Ṣabala** – A rogue elephant. He was harassing the Munis at a holy place named Prabhāsa Tīrtha* until he was killed by a Vānara* named Kēsari (*husband of Anjana, mother of Hanumān*). *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣabaḷāṣvas** – Sons of Daksha Prajāpati* and his wife Asikni. Their father directed them to procreate. As they were preparing to obey their father, Sage Nārada came to them and advised them "Why do you get entangled in family ties? Work instead to find the means of Mukti*. Did your older brothers, the Haryaṣvas procreate? Follow their lead." They took Nārada's advice to heart and went to the Tapōvana*. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣabari** – A tribal woman, a forest-dweller. She lived on the banks of the river Pampa, serving Sages and worshipping God with extreme devotion and immersion in Yōga. Ṣabari had intended to leave the world with the power of Yōga. However, having heard that Lord Rāma had arrived in Chitrakūṭa (*the forest that was her dwelling*), she decided to continue living with a desire to see Him. Rāma came to that forest only to see Ṣabari, having been informed by Kabandha about her. She had gathered many fruits to give to Rāma. When He arrived, she fed Him the fruits and made a

worshipful salutation with a Namaskāra*. With her desire fulfilled, she willed a fire into being and entering the fire, attained Mukti*. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣachi** – Wife of Indra*. She had a son Jayanta and a daughter Jayanti.

When Nahusha became Indra, he became extremely arrogant and started humiliating and insulting the Dēvas and Munis. Seeing Ṣachī Dēvi and desiring her, he ordered that she be brought to him. At the time, her husband was in hiding, afraid of the consequences of the heinous sin of killing a Brahmin (*even though Indra is a position and not an individual, Ṣachi was loyal to her husband, who was temporarily replaced due to his abdication*). On the advice of Bṛhaspati (*the Guru of the Dēvas*), she employed a clever ruse of agreeing to sleep with him on condition that he arrive at her palace riding a palanquin borne by Munis. Blinded by arrogance and lust, Nahusha ordered Sage Agastya and other Munis to carry his palanquin. The Munis, offended by Nahusha's arrogance, gave him a Ṣāpa* that he will turn into a serpent. Ṣachi thus escaped Nahusha's clutches. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sadama** – An Asura*. Brother of Vidama. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sagara** – A king. Son of Bāhu (*also known as Asita*). The Haihayas, enemies of his father, drove Bāhu from his kingdom before Sagara was born. Bāhu died in the forest, where he and his wife had taken refuge in the Āṣram of Sage Aurva. Sagara's mother, even though she was pregnant at the time, attempted to immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre. Aurva, seeing her attempt, dissuaded her, telling her the child in her womb will grow

up to be a great king. Sagara was born in the Āṣram. Earlier in her pregnancy, jealous of her for becoming pregnant before them, King Bāhu's other wives administered Gara (*poison*) to her. The poison remained in her stomach but did not hurt the fetus. The baby was named Sagara since he was born with poison.

Learning from Sage Vasishṭha that his father was dethroned by the Haihayas, Sagara was determined to kill them. He performed an Aṣvamēdha Yāga* and went on killing the kings who tried to capture the horse. The king of Vidarbha gave his daughter Vaidarbhi (*also known as Sumati*) in marriage to Sagara. Sagara also married Kēṣini (*also known as Ṣaibya*). He then returned to his father's capital city, Ayōdhya. The citizens of Ayōdhya welcomed him as their rightful monarch and rejoiced.

Sagara was childless for a long time. Worried about lacking a successor to the throne, he left the city, and accompanied by his wives, went to the forest and visited Sage Aurva. The Sage told him that one of his wives will bear a son who will not follow Dharma (*the path of righteousness*), whose dynasty will last until the end of the epoch, and that the other wife will have sixty thousand sons. He then went to Kailāsa mountain with his wives and performed Tapas*. Lord Ṣiva appeared and told him that Kēṣini will have a son that establishes a dynasty, and that Vaidarbhi will have sixty thousand sons. Sagara and his wives returned to Ayōdhya. Both his wives became pregnant. A son was born to each. Sage Aurva came and cut Sumati's son into sixty thousand pieces and put each piece in a pot. Sixty thousand sons emerged from the pots.

Asamanjasa, Sagara's son by Kēṣini was acting in evil ways. The

citizens complained to Sagara about his misdeeds. Sagara, without any special consideration for his son, expelled Asamanjasa from the city. Sagara performed another Aṣvamēdha Yāga and sent his sixty thousand sons to follow and protect the horse. The horse suddenly disappeared while it was walking along the seashore. The sons searched everywhere, but were unable to find the horse. They returned to the city and reported to Sagara that the horse had gone away and could not be found. He told his sons that they cannot enter the city unless they were able to bring the Yāga horse with them. They dug the ocean looking for the horse and died at the hands of Sage Kapila. Sage Nārada informed Sagara of the demise of his sons. Sagara, after briefly mourning the death of his sons, sent Amṣumanta, son of Asamanjasa, to find the horse. Amṣumanta was able to retrieve the horse by humbly requesting Kapila, returned and told Sagara what he learned from Kapila. Sagara then overcame his grief at the loss of his sons and adopted the ocean as his son. It was thus that the ocean came to be known by the name Sāgara. Sagara then completed the Yāga, and turning the kingdom over to his grandson Amṣumanta, retired to the Tapōvana*. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*

**Sagara's Sons** – The sixty thousand sons that had emerged from the pots from pieces of Sumati's son also turned out to be evil. Along with Sagara's other son Asamanjasa, they were harassing Munis and Brahmins and desecrating Yāgas. As Asamanjasa was behaving even worse than his other sons, Sagara expelled him from the city.

The Dēvas informed Lord Brahma about the evil deeds of Sagara's sons. He told them "A Sage named Kapila will be born

with aspects of Lord Vishṇu, and Sagara's sons will be destroyed by him. See to it that Kapila's Samādhi (*deep meditation*) is disturbed by Sagara's sons. Their deaths will thereby be assured."

Sagara performed an Aṣvamēdha Yāga* and directed his sixty thousand sons to follow the horse, defeat any kings who try to capture the horse, and bring it back safely. They followed the horse all across the land and watched the horse enter the ocean. The water of the ocean immediately evaporated. Using the opportunity thus created, Indra* directed Vāyu (*the God of Wind*) to tie Sagara's Yāga horse near Kapila's Āṣram (*which was in the netherworld, Pātāḷa*). Vāyu instantly conveyed the horse to Pātāḷa, making the horse invisible to Sagara's sons. They went back to Sagara and informed him that the horse had disappeared. He told them they are not to enter the city without the Yāga horse. Returning to the spot where they last saw the horse and suspecting that the horse might be inside where the ocean was, they started digging. They saw Pātāḷa after they dug eight thousand miles deep. They saw the horse tied up there and they also saw Kapila with his Tējas*. Assuming that he must have stolen the horse, they disturbed his deep meditation. Angry at the disturbance, Kapila opened his eyes and looked at them. Fire from his angry eyes burned them to ashes instantly. Sagara turned the kingdom over to Amṣumanta, the son of Asamanjasa. Amṣumanta's son, Bhagīratha prayed to Lord Ṣiva, brought the heavenly river Ganga to earth. When the holy river flowed over the ashes of Sagara's sons, their sins were washed away and their souls went to Swarga (*heaven*). *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Sahadēva I** – Son of Sudasa, who was the son of Sage Chyavana.

His son was Sōmaka. *Bhāgavata*

**Sahadēva II** – Kshētraja* son of King Pānḍu (*one of the twin sons of his second wife Mādri by the twin Gods, the Aṣvins, after Pānḍu incurred a Ṣāpa* that he would die the moment he made love to one of his wives. He had Kunti use the Mantra from her boon from Sage Durvāsa to summon three Gods who gave her three sons and also teach it to Mādri to become a mother*). Twin of Nakula.

His wife (*each of the Pānḍavas had at least one wife he did not share with his brothers, in addition to Draupadi, shared by all five*) by a Swayamvara* was Vijaya. They had a son named Suhōtra.

As the Pānḍavas left the kingdom after coronating Parīkshit (*Arjuna's grandson*) and proceeded northwards, Sahadēva was the second to fall down after Draupadi. His early fall was due to his overweening vanity, thinking himself to be the most learned man in the land. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sahadēva III** – Son of Jarāsandha. Jarāsandha, before going to battle Bhīma, crowned him king. Sahadēva became friendly with Bhīma and the Pānḍavas. They let him remain king. During the Mahā Bhārata war, he allied himself with the Pānḍavas and commanded a regiment. His son was Mēghasandhi. *Mahā Bhārata; Bhāgavata*

**Sahadēva IV** – Son of Dhūmrāksha and father of Kṛṣāṣva. *Bhāgavata*

**Sahadēva V** – Son of Sṛnjaya. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sāhasika** – Son of Bali. He performed Tapas* directed towards

Lord Kṛshṇa. Once, while he was on the Gandhamādana mountain, he saw the Apsara* Tilōttama going on her way to a rendezvous with Chandra (*the Moon God*). He stopped her and was making love to her day and night. Sage Durvāsa, who was performing Tapas nearby, was disturbed by their happy squealing and moaning and the tinkling of the bells on her anklets. Always quick to anger, the Sage gave Sāhasika a Ṣāpa* that he will become a donkey because that was the shameless way he was behaving. Sāhasika begged him for forgiveness. Taking mercy on him because he was not only the son of Bali, but also a devotee himself, Durvāsa told him "As you wander around Bṛndāvan (*Lord Kṛshṇa's favourite garden where He enjoys Rāsa Līla [Sanskrit for 'romantic play']*), you will be killed by Kṛshṇa and be released from the Ṣāpa and attain Mukti*. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Sahasrakanṭha** – Older brother of Rāvaṇa (*Sahasra is Sanskrit for 'one thousand', Kanṭha means 'neck'. Rāvaṇa was Daṣakanṭha, meaning 'with ten necks'*). He lived on Pushkara Dwīpa (*Dwīpa is Sanskrit for 'island'*). Rāvaṇa was to Sahasrakanṭha what an insect is to a man. After He killed Daṣakanṭha Rāvaṇa, He was extolled by Munis. Sīta laughed out loud and said "What is so great about defeating Rāvaṇa? There is the far more powerful Sahasrakanṭha!" She then related the story of Sahasrakanṭha. Rāma, accompanied by His full forces, went to war against Sahasrakanṭha (*who had a boon that no male can kill him*). Rāma was struck by Sahasrakanṭha's weapons and fell unconscious. Sīta then took on a terrible, furious form. Many female warriors emerged from her and were chopping off

Sahasrakaṇṭha's heads and playing with them as if they were balls. The Goddess earth was unable to bear Her terrible burden. Lord Ṣiva fell under Her feet (*perhaps to distribute the load more evenly*). After killing Sahasrakaṇṭha, Sīta showed Her Viṣvarūpa (*the whole Universe embedded in Her*). Rāma, regaining consciousness, recognised Her as Ādi Ṣakti (*Sanskrit for 'Primal Energy' – the Supreme Being is normally pure energy and takes various physical forms suitable for the occasion*). *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sahasrāksha** – King of the country of Pāṇḍu. He spent all his time among women. One day, as he was cavorting naked with thousands of women on the banks of the Tungabhadra river, Sage Durvāsa came there. He did not salute the Sage with a Namaskāra*. This enraged Durvāsa (*reputed to be quick to anger and pass out Ṣāpas**), who gave him a Ṣāpa that he would become an Asura*. When he apologised and begged the Sage's forgiveness, the Sage told the king that when Lord Kṛshṇa kills him by kicking him, he will regain his former position. He was born as Tṛṇāvarta. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Sahasrānīka** – Son of King Ṣatānīka, son of Janamējaya (*great-grandson of Arjuna*). His son was Aṣvamēdhaja. *Bhāgavata*

**Sahasrapāda** – A Brahmin. Once, as a practical joke, he threw a grass snake at his fellow disciple Khagamukha. Startled, his friend gave him a Ṣāpa* that he will be a weak serpent. When Sahasrapāda begged him for a means of release from the Ṣāpa, he told Sahasrapāda that when Ruru attempts to beat him, he will be released from the Ṣāpa. Awaiting that moment, he became a

serpent named Dundubha. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣaibya I** – Wife of Jyāmagha and daughter-in-law of Rukmakavacha. *Padma Purāṇa*

**Ṣaibya II** – One of the horses yoked to Lord Kṛshṇa's chariot. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣailūsha** – Father of Sarama, wife of Vibhīshaṇa (*youngest brother of Rāvaṇa, who abandoned his brothers, and joined and assisted Rāma in the Rāmāyaṇa war*). *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Saindhava** – Son of Vṛddhakshatra, king of the country of Sindhu. His given name was Jayadratha. When, as a young boy, he was playing, Ākāṣavāṇi* announced "His head will be severed when he is distracted." Upset with this prediction of his dear son's fate, Vṛddhakshatra proclaimed a Ṣāpa* that the head of the person who makes his son's head fall to the ground will be shattered into a hundred pieces.

Saindhava married Dussala, daughter of Dhṛtarāshṭra. While on his way to marrying another woman, the princess of Sālva, Saindhava happened to see Draupadi, who was alone in the forest. He sent his friend Kōṭikāsya to find out who she is. Then he himself approached Draupadi and asked her to marry him. Draupadi berated him. He pulled the end of her sari. She pushed him down to the ground. He got up and placing her in his chariot, was driving away. The Pāṇḍavas, returning to their cottage and finding Draupadi missing, found out from her maidservant that Saindhava had abducted her. They pursued him, defeated his army, and brought Draupadi back. Bhīma and Arjuna continued to chase him, and after defeating the armies of Sindhu, Sauvīra and Ṣibi,

captured Saindhava, tied him to their chariot and brought him to their cottage. Bhīma was about to kill him, but Dharmarāja, citing their familial relationship as the husband of their cousin Dussala, stopped him. Instead, they humiliated him by shaving his head. They told him to proclaim himself as a servant of the Pāṇḍavas. Saindhava bid farewell to the Pāṇḍavas and the Munis who were there with a Namaskāra*, after acknowledging that he is their servant.

Saindhava was devastated by the humiliation. With intent to avenge the insult, he went to the banks of the Ganga river and performed Tapas* directed towards Lord Ṣiva. When Ṣiva appeared, he asked for a boon by which he will be able to defeat the Pāṇḍavas. Ṣiva granted that for one day, he will be able to defeat all the Pāṇḍavas except Arjuna.

During the Mahā Bhārata war, on a day when Arjuna was drawn away from the main battlefield, Abhimanyu penetrated the Kauravas' Padma Vyūha* *(Arjuna was the only warrior on the Pāṇḍavas' side who had the ability to enter as well as break out of the maze. Abhimanyu, while still in his mother's womb, learnt by listening to his father how to penetrate the Padma Vyūha. Before Arjuna could describe how to exit from it, Kṛshṇa pulled Arjuna away*), expecting that Dharmarāja and other warriors will follow him in and essentially break the Vyūha. However, Saindhava, using his boon from Ṣiva defeated the four Pāṇḍavas other than Arjuna, and prevented them from going to the aid of Abhimanyu. Abhimanyu, caught in an ambush and unable to extricate himself, was killed.

Arjuna, returning to the main battlefield and learning that

Abhimanyu was killed by Saindhava preventing help from the other Pānḍavas, vowed that he will kill Saindhava before sunset the next day, and if he fails to do so, will kill himself. The Kaurava leaders heard Arjuna's vow. Stalwart warriors including Drōṇa and Karṇa were guarding Saindhava (*if they managed to keep Saindhava alive past sunset on the next day, the war would essentially end in a victory for the Kauravas because after Arjuna's suicide, the Pānḍavas would have neither the will nor the ability to fight the Kauravas*). Arjuna could not find Saindhava anywhere. Lord Kṛshṇa created an artificial sunset (*by blocking the Sun, momentarily, with His Chakra**). Saindhava emerged from hiding, jubilant that Arjuna will now kill himself. Kṛshṇa immediately recalled the Chakra and Arjuna shot Saindhava with an arrow, severing his head. Having been alerted by Kṛshṇa to not let the severed head fall to the ground, Arjuna kept shooting arrows, keeping Saindhava's head suspended in the air. Finally, using his special weapon (*which he had obtained as a boon from Lord Ṣiva*), the Pāṣupatāstra, directing it to drop Saindhava's head into the lap of his father Vṛddhakshatra as he was performing Tapas. Startled when something fell into his lap, Saindhava's father threw it to the ground. His head shattered into pieces, by his own Ṣāpa. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sairandhri** – Name adopted by Draupadi during the incognito year. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣākalya** – Son of Saubhari. He subdivided the branch of the Ṛg Vēda that he had learned, and taught them to his disciples Vātsya, Maudgalya, Ṣālīya, Gōmukha, and Ṣikhara. They in turn taught them to Jātukarṇi. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣākalya Muni** – Once, an Asura* named Paraṣu came to this Muni's Āṣram and said "I am hungry. Please feed me." The Muni served him a meal. Paraṣu looked at the food served by Ṣākalya and said "This food is not nearly enough for me. I am an Asura. I will eat you too." Ṣākalya told him that eating him is beyond the Asura's capability, and he is protected, from head to foot, by Brahma and other Gods. He then asked the Asura politely to just eat the food given to him and go away. The Asura stood up and approached the Muni in a threatening manner. At that moment, Ṣākalya appeared to the Asura as if he had a thousand heads and two thousand arms. Now terrified, the Asura said to Ṣākalya "You are no ordinary man. Pardon my behaviour and enlighten me." Ṣākalya advised him to go bathe in the river Gautami and pray to Goddess Sarasvati (*Consort of Lord Brahma*). *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*

Once, King Janaka, while performing a Yāga, invited all the Munis, and intending to felicitate the greatest of them, placed piles of gold in front of them and said "O Sages! Please decide among yourselves who is the greatest among you. That Muni shall receive the gold you see." All the Sages started shouting, each claiming he is the greatest. Sage Yāgjnyavalka, confidently asserting his own greatness, ordered his disciples to gather up the gold. Then Ṣākalya challenged him to an argument, with the cost of defeat set as death. Yāgjnyavalkya correctly answered all thousand questions Ṣākalya posed to him and Ṣākalya was unable to answer even one of Yāgjnyavalkya's questions. Ṣākalya ended his life in accordance with their agreement. *Agni Purāṇa*

**Ṣakradēva** – Son of Ṣrutāyu, king of Kaḷinga (*modern-day State*

*of Odisha in eastern India*). He fought in the Mahā Bhārata war on the Kaurava side. Bhīma killed him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣakti** – Eldest son of Sage Vasishṭha. His wife was Adṛṣyanti. An Asura* named Rudhira once swallowed him and his brothers. Adṛṣyanti was pregnant at the time. Vasishṭha and his wife Arundhati, even though devastated by the death of their sons, decided to stay alive in order to take cae of their future grandchild. A son named Parāṣara (*father of Vēda Vyāsa*) was born to Adṛṣyanti. *Linga Purāṇa*

Once, Ṣakti came across King Kalmāshapāda as the king was returning from a hunt. The king said to him "Why do you not give way to me? Why so arrogant?" He replied "I am a Brahmin. I am well-versed in the holy Vēdas. Any king would give way to someone like me." This made the king furious. Annoyed by his behaviour, Ṣakti gave him a Ṣāpa*, saying "Since you behaved like an Asura, become one." Sage Viṣvāmitra, a sworn enemy of Sage Vasishṭha, aware of this Ṣāpa, directed another Asura named Kinkara to possess Kalmāshapāda. Another Brahmin also gave the king a Ṣāpa that he would become a man-eater. Believing that this Ṣāpa was also attributable to Ṣakti, Kalmāshapāda, saying "You be the first to experience the consequences of the Ṣāpas given to me", swallowed Ṣakti and his one hundred brothers. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣaktimati** – City ruled by King Suratha. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Saktuprastha** – A Brahmin. He was so poor that he survived only by begging. One day, he obtained a quantity of fried rice powder. He, his wife, their son and daughter-in-law planned to divide it into four equal shares and eat it. All of a sudden, a guest arrived

(*custom was that if even an uninvited visitor arrived at one's house at mealtime, the visitor has to be offered a meal before the family members could eat*). Saktuprastha gave the guest his share of the food. After finishing it, the guest was still hungry. One after the other, his wife, their son and daughter-in-law gave the guest their share. Finally, the guest revealed himself to be the God of Dharma and took them all to Swarga Lōka (*heaven*). A few particles of the rice powder happened to fall on the feet of a mongoose. The spots where the powder fell, turned golden. This mongoose once went to a Yāga being performed by Dharmarāja (*eldest of the Pānḍavas*) and said with contempt "This does not compare with what Saktuprastha had done!" The mongoose was Sage Jamadagni (*father of Paraṣurāma, Lord Vishṇu's sixth Avatāra*) in a previous birth. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣakuni I** – Son of the Asura* Hiraṇyāksha. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Ṣakuni II** – Maternal uncle of Duryōdhana. He had brothers named Vṛshaka and Achala. His son was Ulūka. He lived in Hastināpura, the capitol of the Kaurava Empire. He was aiding and abetting Duryōdhana and his brothers in their evil plots against the Pānḍavas. He was the one who advised his nephew to invite Dharmarāja to the games of chance (*an invitation he knew Dharmarāja culd not decline to gambling with dice to be fixed by Ṣakuni*). He also suggested to Duryōdhana that he should find some way to kill the Pānḍavas during their exile in the forest. He tried to use evil tricks during the war also but was foiled in his attempts by Arjuna. The twins Nakula and Sahadēva killed him in the war. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣakuntala** – Daughter of Sage Viṣvāmitra and the Apsara* Mēnaka. Almost as soon as she was born, both her parents abandoned her and went their separate ways. Some birds sheltered the baby Ṣakuntala under their wings. Sage Kaṇva happened to see her under the wings of the birds (*similar to bluejays, named Ṣakuntas*) and took her to his Āṣram and gave her the name Ṣakuntala. She grew up into a beautiful young woman. One day, while Sage Kaṇva was away from his Āṣram, King Dushyanta, while on a hunt, stopped by the Āṣram wishing to visit the Sage. Seeing Ṣakuntala in the Āṣram, he asked her whose daughter she was. Ṣakuntala recounted to him her story as she knew it and requested him to stay until Sage Kaṇva returned to the Āṣram. Dushyanta proposed marriage to her and asked that she go with him to his city as his queen. She told him that she could not get married except by Kaṇva giving her away in marriage. Dushyanta persuaded her that as a Kshatriya, it was appropriate for him to marry in the Gāndharva* manner. She requested only one condition, namely that a son born to her succeed him to the throne, to which Dushyanta readily agreed. They then got married in the Gāndharva manner. Dushyanta left, telling her that he would send for her after returning to the capital. She was concerned about Kaṇva's reaction to the important step she had taken without his knowledge. Kaṇva, learning of the event by his Yōga Dṛshṭi*, approved of her marriage. Much time passed without a word from King Dushyanta. A son was born to Ṣakuntala. The boy was growing up in Sage Kaṇva's Āṣram. The boy had the unusual power by which even the fiercest animals behaved like domestic pets in his presence. He brought many predators and tied them up

to trees in the Āṣram. His child's play consisted of domesticating such animals and riding wild elephants. He acquired the name Sarvadamana (*Sanskrit for 'subdues all'*) as a result of these exploits. Kaṇva, tired of waiting for a call from Dushyanta, sent Ṣakuntala and the boy to Dushyanta's Sabha (*court*) with an escort of his disciples. As soon as Ṣakuntala related to Dushyanta in open court the events following his visit to the Āṣram, Dushyanta rejected her claim and announced that she was not his wife and the boy was not his son. But then, Ākāṣavāṇi* announced that Ṣakuntala was in fact his wife and her boy was his son. Announcing that his earlier rejection of Ṣakuntala was only due to fear of public opinion, he accepted Ṣakuntala and Bharata as his wife and son. *Mahā Bhārata*

(*The great Sanskrit Poet, Kāḷidāsa, while composing a drama on Ṣakuntala, Abhigjnāna Ṣākuntalam [Abhigjnāna means 'token of recognition' in Sanskrit], added some dramatic flourishes to the story. In this version, the story after Dushyanta went back to his capital after marrying Ṣakuntala runs as: Finding herself pregnant, Ṣakuntala was constantly thinking of Dushyanta and unmindful of her surroundings. In this situation, Sage Durvāsa arrived at the Āṣram and loudly asked for alms. In her preoccupation with thoughts of her husband and the child within her, Ṣakuntala failed to hear the Sage's hail. Angered by her failure to respond. and divining the reason with his spiritual power, he gave her a Ṣāpa* that Dushyanta will forget every thing about Ṣakuntala and added that he will recollect his marriage to her only when he sees an Abhigjnāna. Sage Kaṇva sent Ṣakuntala and her son to Dushyanta, who rejected her as a*

*result of the Ṣāpa. It was only when he saw the Abhigjnāna, a ring he had presented to her on his visit to the Āṣram, that the Ṣāpa was removed and he recollected his marriage and happily received his wife and son. The son was named Bharata and is the progenitor of the Kaurava and Pānḍava dynasties.*)

**Ṣala** – Son of Suṣōbhana and Parīkshit (*a king of Sūrya Vamṣa, not Abhimanyu's son*). Once, he went on a hunt and was chasing one particular animal. As fast as he went, the animal ran faster. His chariot-driver informed him that his horses could not go any faster, and that a Brahmin named Vāmadēva had very fast horses. Ṣala went to Vāmadēva and requested him to lend his horses, promising to return them soon. Vāmadēva let him borrow the horses which Ṣala hitched to his chariot, completed the hunt but did not return the horses to Vāmadēva. After sending his disciple to Ṣala to request that the horses be returned with no success, Vāmadēva himself went and asked for them. Ṣala said to him "You are a Brahmin. Why do you need horses? Take a pair of bullocks and go away." Vāmadēva would not leave and kept repeating his demand. Instead of returning the horses, the king actually attempted to kill the Brahmin. Vāmadēva, using his spiritual power acquired by Tapas*, created Asuras who killed the king. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sālagrāma** – A stone (*black stone that contains a fossil Ammonite*) in the Ganḍaki river pervaded by the presence of Lord Vishṇu. Once upon a time, Vishṇu deceived Tulasi by disguising Himself as her husband Ṣankhachūḍa and made love to her. Once she realized that she was deceived, she gave Vishṇu a Ṣāpa* that He would become a stone. He prayed to Lord Ṣiva. Ṣiva appeared

and told them that Tulasi would become the Ganḍaki river (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*) and Vishṇu would become a Sālagrāma in her. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Ṣalāvanta** – Father of Ṣilaka. *Chāndōgya Upanishad*

**Ṣālihōtra** – A Muni. He used his spiritual power to obtain a special lake and a tree. Anyone who drinks the water from the lake will be free of hunger and thirst. Anyone under the tree is shielded from rain and sun. During their exile in the forest, he provided hospitality in his Āṣram to the Pānḍavas and taught them some moral precepts. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sālapōtaka** – A Nāga* king. Once, while wandering in a garden, he saw Bahuḷa, wife of Uttama, and fell in love with her. Using the power of his magic, he took her to his palace. His daughter Nanda, concerned that Bahuḷa will be a rival to her mother, hid Bahuḷa to protect her mother. However much Sālapōtaka questioned her about where she hid his beloved, she did not tell him. Angry with her, Sālapōtaka gave his daughter a Ṣāpa* that she would become dumb. Finally, an Asura* named Balāka took Bahuḷa and returned her to her husband. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Ṣāliṣūka** – Son of Samyata, who was the grandson of Aṣōka. His son was Sōmaṣarma. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣālīya** – Disciple of Ṣākalya. He taught to Jātukarṇi a portion of the Ṛg Vēda. *Bhāgavata*

**Sālva** – Son of Damaghōsha. Younger brother of Ṣiṣupāla. He fell in love with Amba, daughter of the king of Kāṣi*. Amba loved him as well, but at her Swayamvara*, Bhīshma abducted her and

her two sisters. Sālva attacked Bhīshma on his way but was defeated and returned to his city. Amba informed Bhīshma that she and Sālva loved each other. Bhīshma rejected her as the bride of the Kuru Emperor because she had another man in her heart.

After Kṛshṇa killed his brother Ṣiṣupāla, Sālva was very angry with Him. With an intense desire to defeat Kṛshṇa and destroy the Yadu dynasty, he performed Tapas* directed towards Lord Ṣiva. When Ṣiva appeared, Sālva asked for a vehicle that could fly and be beyond the ability of Garutmanta* and Gandharvas* to outrun. Ṣiva commanded Maya* to construct such a vehicle for Sālva. *Bhāgavata*

Using his flying vehicle, Sālva attacked Dwāraka (*Kṛshṇa's city in the middle of the ocean*). At the time, Kṛshṇa was not in the city. Sāmba, Pradyumna and other warriors were guarding Dwāraka. Sālva defeated several Yadu warriors including Sāmba. However, hit by Pradyumna's arrows, he lost consciousness. Pradyumna was about to kill him but Sage Nārada, saying Kṛshṇa was the one who would kill him, restrained Pradyumna. Kṛshṇa, learning by then that Sālva had attacked Dwāraka, arrived and chased him. Sālva fought Him using black magic, causing a rain of stones to fall on Kṛshṇa. Sālva also created a fake Vasudēva and threatened to kill him. At first Kṛshṇa believed it was His father and felt sad but quickly realized it was Māya (*illusion*) and killed Sālva using His Chakra*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sālvēya** – Son of Nitanta. He and his brothers including Ṣūrasēna all married the same woman, Ajita. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣalya** – King of country named Madra. In a previous life, he was Samhlāda, son of Hiraṇyakaṣipu (see **Jaya and Vijaya**). Mādri,

second wife of King Pāṇḍu, was his sister. His son was Rukmaratha. The Pāṇḍavas assumed that, because he was the maternal uncle of the twins, Nakula and Sahadēva, he would fight on their side in the war. Lord Kṛshṇa sent emissaries to request him to join the Pāṇḍavas. As he and his army were on the march to join the Pāṇḍavas, Duryōdhana came to know Ṣalya's intent and sent his minions to provide various comforts and facilities to Ṣalya's troops on their march. Pleased by the hospitality rendered to his troops, Ṣalya inquired as to who was the benefactor. Seizing the opportunity, Duryōdhana approached him and made a plea to him to join the Kaurava side in the war. Ṣalya agreed but said he would first visit the Pāṇḍavas. He visited the Pāṇḍavas' encampment and embraced them with affection. Dharmarāja again asked him to join the Pāṇḍava side. But Ṣalya told him that he had already promised Duryōdhana he would join the Kaurava side and could not break his promise. Dharmarāja then requested him to, at least, upset and discourage Karṇa when he drives Karṇa's chariot. Ṣalya agreed to do so.

In the course of the war, Ṣalya did not betray his promise to Duryōdhana and treated the Pāṇḍavas as he would any enemy. The Pāṇḍavas killed his son Rukmaratha.

Duryōdhana requested Ṣalya to be Karṇa's chariot-driver when Karṇa became the commander of the Kaurava army. Saying "How can you expect me, a crowned monarch, to drive the chariot of a low-born warrior like Karṇa? Why are you humiliating me in front of my fellow rulers?", he threatened to go back to his country immediately. Duryōdhana begged him, saying "I am setting Karṇa against Arjuna. Kṛshṇa is driving Arjuna's chariot. I am asking you

to drive Karṇa's chariot because I consider you to be greater than Kṛshṇa." Ṣalya replied "Your proclamation, in open court, that I am greater than Kṛshṇa is sufficient reward for me. I will drive Karṇa's chariot. However, I reserve the right to say whatever I want to Karṇa. Karṇa has to abide by my rules." Duryōdhana and Karṇa accepted his condition. While driving the chariot, he kept offering strategic advice superior to Karṇa's plan but in a manner and in words that were unacceptable to Karṇa. He kept praising Arjuna's prowess and drawing comparisons unfavourable to Karṇa, such as that Arjuna was like a swan and Karṇa like a crow. This disturbed and annoyed Karṇa so much that Ṣalya was at least partly responsible for Karṇa's death at the hands of Arjuna. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣama** – Son of Manu* named Dharma and husband of Prāpti. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣamantapanchaka** – After killing his Kshatriya (*kings and princes*) enemies, Paraṣurāma (*Lord Vishṇu's sixth incarnation*), filled five lakes with their blood and used the blood to perform funeral oblations for his father who was killed by the kings. The place came to be known as Ṣamantapanchaka. It was near where the Kauravas and Pānḍavas fought the Mahā Bhārata war and was also known as Kurukshētra. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣamaṭha** – A Muni. He described to Dharmarāja the holiness of Gaya (*a city in the State of Bihar, in north India; Gautama Buddha was from near Gaya*) and the story of the Yāga performed there by King Gaya. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sāmba** – Son of Lord Kṛshṇa and Jāmbavati. Once, while Sāmba

and other boys were playing, Sage Nārada came near them. All the boys except Sāmba saluted him with a Namaskāra*. Nārada was angered by his disrespect and determined to somehow humiliate Sāmba. Another time, Nārada arrived while Kṛshṇa was engaged in romantic pursuits with His wives in His Antahpura*. He asked Sāmba to alert Kṛshṇa of his arrival. Sāmba entered the Antahpura. Kṛshṇa, angered at Sāmba for disturbing Him, gave Sāmba a Ṣāpa* that he will be afflicted by leprosy. When Sāmba begged Him for the means of release from the Ṣāpa, Kṛshṇa told him to worship Sūrya (*the Sun God, believed to be the source of good health*) in the city of Kāṣi*. Sāmba did so and was restored to health. (*Kāṣi Khanḍa is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'*.) *Kāṣi Khanḍa*

Sāmba fell in love with Duryōdhana's daughter Lakshaṇa. Duryōdhana, however, did not like the idea of giving his daughter in marriage to Sāmba. Sāmba went to Hastināpura and tried to abduct Lakshaṇa. The Kauravas foiled his attempt and captured him. Balarāma learnt of Sāmba's plight. He went to Hastināpura and declared that he would submerge Hastināpura in the Ganga river if Sāmba was not immediately released. Afraid of Balarāma's (*he was Duryōdhana's Guru in combat using a mace*) ire, Duryōdhana and the Kauravas not only released Sāmba but gave him Lakshaṇa in marriage.

Once, Sages including Kaṇva visited Dwāraka (*city built in the middle of the ocean by Lord Kṛshṇa*). Some Yādava (*cowherd*) boys, wanting to play a practical trick on them, disguised Sāmba as a pregnant woman and asked the Sages "Sirs, will a daughter or son be born to this woman?" With their Divya Dṛshṭi*, they realized that the boys were playing a silly prank. They said "A

pestle which will cause the destruction of the Yādava dynasty will be born to her." As predicted, a pestle which was instrumental in the destruction of all the residents of Dwāraka emerged from Sāmba's stomach. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣāmba** – Son of Āpu (*one of the eight Vasus*). *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Ṣambaḷapura** – The city where Lord Vishṇu will take an incarnation with the name of Vishṇu Ṣarma (*the extension Ṣarma identifies a man as a Brahmin*) during the Kali Yuga (*epoch, the current one that started about 5,000 years ago*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣambara I** – A Muni. Once, a female Asura* named Māhishmati took the form of a buffalo and was destroying the sacrificial fires where Munis perform Hōmas*. Ṣambara gave her a Ṣāpa* that she will remain a she-buffalo for a hundred years. When she begged for a means of release from the Ṣāpa, he told her that she will obtain her release from the Ṣāpa when a son is born to her. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Ṣambara II** – An Asura*. Son of Jaṭāsura. He once heard Ākāṣavāṇi* proclaim that his death will occur at the hands of Lord Kṛshṇa's son, Pradyumna. Wanting to eliminate the threat to his life, he sneaked into the birthing room where the eight-day old Pradyumna was sleeping, abducted the infant and threw him in the ocean. A fish swallowed the infant. A fisherman caught the fish in his net. Finding the fish he caught very large, he presented it to the daughter of Ṣambara. As she cut the fish open, she was stunned to see a live boy inside. Sage Nārada arrived just then and told her that the boy was Pradyumna. Ṣambara, happening to overhear this, came to kill the boy. A fight ensued between Ṣambara and the boy.

Ṣambara was killed by Pradyumna. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Sambhava** – Sister of Gāndhāri. Dhṛtarāshṭra married her as well. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣambhu I** – Wife of Dhruva and mother of sons named Ṣishṭi and Bhavya. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Ṣambhu II** – Son of Ambarīsha. He went to the forest to perform Tapas* directed towards Lord Vishṇu. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣambu** – (*also known as Sākalya*) A Brahmin who lived in the city of Hastina (*the capital of the Kaurava empire*). After the Mahā Bhārata war ended with all his sons killed, Dhṛtarāshṭra addressed the people to let them know that he and the Kaurava women were leaving for the forest to perform Tapas* and apologised for the evil actions of his sons which caused such massive devastation. Ṣambu, saying he was speaking on behalf of all the people, assured Dhṛtarāshṭra that the people were, in fact, happy under Duryōdhana's regime. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣambuka** – A Yōgi (*ascetic*) of the Ṣūdra* caste. During the reign of Lord Rāma on the earth, this Yōgi was preparing to go to heaven by the spiritual power of his Tapas*. It was discovered that a Brahmin boy died as a direct result of a Ṣūdra performing Tapas. Because he had caused such a misfortune, Rāma killed Ṣambuka. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Samhāra** – One of the Bhairavas. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Samhita** – Sister of Gāndhāri. Dhṛtarāshṭra married her as well. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Samhlāda** – Son of Hiraṇyakaṣipu and his wife Datta, daughter of

Jambhāsura. Samhlāda's wife was Gati. Their son was Panchajana. Samhlāda was Ṣalya in his next life. *Bhāgavata; Matsya Purāṇa; Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣamīka** – A Muni. Once King Parīkshit (*son of Abhimanyu, born as the only scion of the Pānḍavas, saved by Lord Kṛshṇa after all other fetuses of the wives of the Pānḍavas' sons were destroyed by Aṣvatthāma's attempt to abort them all*), tired after a hunt, reached his Āṣram hoping to quench his thirst. When he asked Sage Ṣamīka for water, the Sage did not hear him or see him, being in Samādhi (*deep meditation*). Furious at being ignored, the king picked up a dead serpent lying nearby and put it around Ṣamīka's neck and went away. Ṣamīka's son Ṣṛngi, hearing of what the king had done, came and removed the dead serpent from his father's neck, and proclaimed a Ṣāpa* that whoever put a dead serpent around his father's neck would die by a serpent bite within a week. He informed his father of what had happened when Ṣamīka came out of Samādhi and opened his eyes. Ṣamīka was upset that the king had been given a Ṣāpa and explained to his son that it was improper to give a Ṣāpa to the king, who was their protector. But once given, the Ṣāpa could not be countermanded. The best he could do was to send one of his disciples to forewarn the king of the Ṣāpa.

He collected and protected the eggs of Tārkshi (*an articulate bird that was flying over the Mahā Bhārata battlefield and got hit by one of Arjuna's arrows*) that fell to the ground. *Bhāgavata*

**Samkṛti** – Son of Nara and grandson of Manyu. His son was Rantidēva. *Bhāgavata*

**Sampāti I** – An articulate bird. Son of Ṣyēni (*an articulate female bird*) and Anūra (Sūrya's chariot-driver). Jaṭāyu (*also an articulate bird*) was his younger brother. They were living in the Āṣram of a Muni named Niṣākara. Once, when Niṣākara was visiting Swarga (*heaven*), the brothers, challenging each other about who can fly closest to the Sun, flew up. The Sun's heat burned Sampāti's wings and he fell to the ground on the slopes of the Vindhya mountain. Niṣākara found him and took care of him. The Muni informed Sampāti of many events that will happen in the future: that Rāma will come to the forest; that Vānaras* will come searching for Sīta who would be abducted; that Rāvaṇa would be killed; and that Sampāti will regain his wings. Sampāti had sons named Supārṣva, Babhru, and Ṣīghraga. The Vānaras searching for Sīta, bitterly disappointed at not finding Her, were sitting in front of his cave, in an act of Prāyōpavēṣam*. Sampāti approached them, intending to make a meal of them. He heard the name 'Jaṭāyu' in their conversation and happy and eager to hear news of his brother whom he had not seen since the ill-fated flight to the Sun, he inquired about his brother, and informed them of his story. He told Angada and the other Vānaras that Rāvaṇa had carried Sīta away to Lanka*. He directed his sons to go to Lanka and visit Sīta there. He regained his wings. *Rāmāyaṇa; Matsya Purāṇa*

**Sampāti II** – Son of Māli. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sampriya** – Wife of Vidūratha and mother of Anaṣva. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sāmrāgjni** – Daughter of Priyavrata. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Samṣaptakas** – Collective name for King Suṣarma of Trigarta and his brothers including Satyaratha, Satyasēna, and Satyakarma. They allied themselves with Duryōdhana in the Mahā Bhārata war. They fought with firm determination to kill Arjuna (*they were instrumental in drawing Arjuna away from the main battlefield the day Abhimanyu broke through the Padma Vyūha*, enabling other Kaurava commanders to ambush Abhimanyu and kill him*), but were themselves defeated. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Samudra** – (*The Ocean God*) Lord Rāma, on His way to Lanka* to rescue Sīta, had to cross the ocean. Vibhīshaṇa (*Rāvaṇa's youngest brother, who went over to his enemy camp*) advised Rāma to pray to Samudra. Rāma followed the advice and sincerely prayed to Samudra. However, Samudra did not appear to Him. Angered by being ignored, Rāma prepared to launch arrows (*Rāma's arrows had the special characteristic that, once launched, could not be recalled*) at Samudra. Now scared, Samudra appeared, saluted Rāma with a Namaskāra and told him that he was a friend of Daṣaratha. He agreed to give Rāma whatever assistance he needed and suggested that Rāma should have Nala, the son of Viṣvakarma* construct a bridge over the ocean. Nala brought rocks and started to build the bridge. The Vānaras* pitched in and completed the bridge. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Samudri** – Wife of Prāchīnabarhi and mother of Prachētasas. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Samvaraṇa** – Son of Ṛksha, who was the son of Ajamīḍha. One day, strolling in a garden, he happened to see Tapati, daughter of Sūrya (*the Sun God*). He fell instantly in love with her, and asked

her to marry him in the Gāndharva* manner. Saying she will not get married without her father's consent, she disappeared. Pining for her, Samvaraṇa fainted. His minister nursed him back to consciousness. Even after regaining consciousness, instead of going back to the city, he stayed there and started worshipping Sūrya. He also invited his royal priest Sage Vasishṭha and told him of his desire. Vasishṭha, using his spiritual power, met Sūrya in his chariot and explaining his mission, brought Tapati with him. Vasishṭha joined Samvaraṇa in worshipping Sūrya. Sūrya appeared and gave his daughter in marriage to Samvaraṇa. Samvaraṇa then left his kingdom and spent twelve years indulging exclusively in lovemaking with his wife. His kingdom suffered from severe drought. Vasishṭha took Samvaraṇa back to the city and had him perform religious rites to propitiate the Gods. A son named Kuru was born to Samvaraṇa and Tapati. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Samvarta** – A Muni. Once, his five sons went to the forest and brought back newborn deer. However, all the deer died. His sons asked him how they can obtain absolution from their sin. Saying they cannot escape Karma (*the consequences of their action*), Samvarta advised them to cover themselves with deer skins and roam in the forest. As they did so, a king named Vīrasēna, hunting in the forest, mistook them for deer and killed them. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Samvartana** – Son of Angirasa. Brother of Bṛhaspati (*the Guru of the Dēvas*). Once, while he was officiating as the priest at a Yāga being performed by King Marut, Rāvaṇa challenged the king to a battle. The king prepared to leave. Samvartana advised the king that it is inauspicious to engage in a battle while in the middle of a

Yāga, and stopped him. He then proceeded to complete the Yāga. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣamyāka** – A Brahmin. He had an argument with Bhīshma regarding wealth. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣamyāprāsa** – The name of the Āṣram of Vēda Vyāsa, located on the west bank of the Sarasvati river. It was here that Vyāsa composed the Mahā Bhārata with Sage Nārada's prompting. *Bhāgavata*

**Samyāti I** – Son of Ṣaryāti and father of Raudrāṣva. *Bhāgavata*

**Samyāti II** – Son of Nahusha. Brother of Yayāti. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Samyāti III** – Son of Prāchīna and husband of Varānti. Their son was Ahamyāti. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Samyōdhakanṭaka** – A soldier in the service of Kubēra (*the God of Wealth; Rāvaṇa's step-brother*). When Rāvaṇa invaded the city of Alaka (*Kubēra's abode in Swarga*), he fought Rāvaṇa but ran away in defeat. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣamyu** – Son of Bṛhaspati (*The Guru of the Dēvas*). His wife was Satya. They had sons named Bharadvāja and Bharata (*Different from the son of Dushyanta and Ṣakuntala*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sanaka, Sanandana etc.** – Great Ṛshis. Sons of Dharma Prajāpati*. Lord Brahma asked them to propagate the species but they did not wish to procreate and preferred to perform Tapas* instead. *Vāmana Purāṇa; Kūrma Purāṇa*

**Sanatkumāras** – Mind-born sons of Lord Brahma. They were born when Brahma uttered the word 'Sana' while performing

Tapas* with the purpose of extending creation. They remain perpetually young and celibate. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Sandhi** – Son of Praṣuṣukra and father of Amarshaṇa. *Bhāgavata*

**Sāndīpa** – Resident of the city of Avanti. A Brahmin. Balarāma (*Kṛshṇa's older brother*), Kṛshṇa, and Kuchēla received their education from him. After they had completed their learning of the sixty four fields of knowledge, Sāndīpa said to them "With capable disciples like you why should I lack anything? My son drowned while bathing in Prabhāsa Tīrtha* and never came back up. Bring him back." Balarāma and Kṛshṇa rode their chariot to the ocean and summoning Samudra (*the Ocean God*), asked him to return their Guru's son. Learning from Samudra that an Asura* named Panchajana had swallowed him and that the boy is now in the Sabha (*court*) of Yama (*the God of Death*), they went there and asked Yama to give them their Guru's son. Realizing that the brothers were aspects of Lord Vishṇu, Yama complied with their request and revived Sāndīpa's son and handed him over to them. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣāṇḍili** – Wife of Prajāpati and mother of Agni (*one of the Vasus, not the God of Fire*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣāṇḍilya** – A Muni. Once, he saw an Apsara* named Dhānyamāli, felt intense lust for her and asked her to have sex with him. She replied that she was having a period and will have sex with him after taking a bath. As soon as she finished her bath, Rāvaṇa happened to see her and had sex with her. Afterwards, she went to the Muni and told him about her encounter. The Muni, furious at being denied his pleasure, gave Rāvaṇa a Ṣāpa* that he would be

destroyed, and one to the Apsara that she would turn into a crocodile. When she begged for a release mechanism from the Ṣāpa, he told her that she will be released from the Ṣāpa when Hanumān, while aiding Lord Rāma, strikes her. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sānga** – Son of Havirdhāna. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Sangjna** – Daughter of Viṣvakarma*. Sūrya (*the Sun God*) married her. Unable to withstand Surya's brightness, she closed her eyes. Annoyed by her gesture, Sūrya said to her "Since you closed your eyes to me, a son will be born to you who will dispense blind justice to everyone." Accordingly, Yama (*the God of Death, who judges every soul on the death of the body it had occupied*) was born to her. When she did open her eyes, they fluttered wildly, trying to adjust to his brilliance. When Sūrya saw her eyes flutter, he told her a daughter who would be restless would be born to her. Thus it was that the river Yamuna (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*) was born to her. Still unable to withstand the heat emanating from her husband, she made her Chhāya (*shadow*) to look exactly like her. After obtaining from Chhāya a promise to not reveal her secret, she left Chhāya in her place and went to her parents' house. Sūrya did not realize for a very long time that the woman living with him as his wife was not, in fact, Sangjna. After she had stayed in her father's house for a long time, Viṣvakarma told his daughter that it was improper for a married woman to stay in her father's house for so long. Sangjna left her father's house, but unwilling to go back to her husband, went to the Kuru country in the north, took the form of a mare and stayed there. Sūrya, realizing that his real wife was in the form of a mare, took the form of a stallion and went to her. Sangjna

recognised the horse as her husband. Their union in the bodies of horses resulted in the birth of the Aṣvins (*twin physicians to the Dēvas named Nāsatya and Dasra, called Aṣvins because they were born to 'Aṣvas', Sanskrit for 'horses'*). Sometime later, Viṣvakarma, in order to reduce the brilliance of his son-in-law, ground him down by about ten percent. Sangjna and Sūrya then reassumed their true forms, and lived together. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Sanjaya I** – Son of a Chariot-driver. He was a constant companion of the Kaurava emperor Dhṛtarāshṭra and attended to his needs (*e.g., a valet*). He would describe to the blind monarch all events of interest, and the state of affairs in the land of Bharata. He was a man of honour and integrity and therefore, never participated in the plans and plottings of Duryōdhana. At the end of the Agjnāta Vāsa (*living incognito*) of the Pānḍavas, Dhṛtarāshṭra sent Sanjaya as his emissary. Unable to make the kind of commitments that would have dissuaded the Pānḍavas from going to war with his sons, Dhṛtarāshṭra asked Sanjaya to try and sweet-talk them into making peace (*on his son's terms, which were essentially, that they would get nothing*). Sanjaya tried and failed.

As Dhṛtarāshṭra wanted a running commentary of the Mahā Bhārata war, Sage Vyāsa gave Sanjaya a divine power. This power would enable Sanjaya to observe the entire battlefield and hear all conversations without being vulnerable to any of the weapons being deployed. It would also make Sanjaya invisible to the warriors. Throughout the war, Sanjaya was thus able to keep Dhṛtarāshṭra abreast of all developments in the battles. Among other developments, Sanjaya narrated to Dhṛtarāshṭra the

philosophy taught by Kṛshṇa to Arjuna, as well as the Bhagavad Gīta. On the eighteenth (*last*) day of the war, Sātyaki (*a constant companion of Kṛshṇa*) somehow saw Sanjaya and was about to kill him. Sage Vyāsa came and stopped Sātyaki, saying it would be improper to kill him (*unarmed persons had indemnity even in the heat of battle*). After the war, Sanjaya accompanied Dhṛtarāshṭra and the women to Tapōvana*. One day, a wildfire spread through the forest and engulfed them. At the urging of Kunti, Gāndhāri and Dhṛtarāshṭra, he escaped the fire and went to the Himālayas. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sanjaya II** – Son of Prīti and father of Jaya. *Bhāgavata*

**Sanjīvani** – A miraculous herb. It can restore dead people to life. Once upon a time, when Dēvas and Asuras* were warring with each other, Asuras were able to kill many Dēvas. Bṛhaspati (*the Guru of the Dēvas*) had this herb brought and restored the Dēvas to life. Sanjīvani can be found only on the Drōṇa mountain and Chandra mountain near the ocean of milk where Amṛtam* was released by churning the ocean. Jāmbavanta (*an articulate bear who played important roles during both the Rāma and Kṛshṇa incarnations*) and Vānaras* such as Sushēṇa knew the location of Sanjīvani.

During the Rāmāyaṇa war, when Vānara warriors and Lakshmaṇa fell unconscious, Hanumān, unable to identify the Sanjīvani among all the herbs on the mountain, brought the whole mountain. As soon as they breathed the air flowing past the herb, they all regained consciousness. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣanka** – Son of Janamējaya (*Arjuna's great-grandson*) of the

Pāṇḍava dynasty. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣankha** – An elephant. He lived in a Tīrtha* called Prabhāsa and was harassing the Munis who came there and was killed by a Vānara* named Kēsari. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣankhachūḍa I** – An attendant of Kubēra (*the God of Wealth*). Once, when Kṛshṇa and Balarāma (*older brother of Kṛshṇa*) were singing, Ṣankhachūḍa used his Yōgic power to draw the female cowherds far from them. Unable to find the brothers after walking a long way, they shouted "O! Kṛshṇa!" Kṛshṇa heard their plaintive cry, went and released the women, and killed Ṣankhachūḍa. He took the diamond Ṣankhachūḍa wore on his head and presented it to Balarāma. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣankhachūḍa II** – An Asura*. Son of Dambha. He performed Tapas* directed towards Brahma. Brahma appeared to him and gave him armor called Kṛshṇa Kavacha and told him that no harm would come to him as long as he wears it. Brahma also directed him to go to the forest known as Badarika Vana and marry Tulasi who lives there. Ṣankhachūḍa accordingly proceeded to Badarika Vana. There he saw Tulasi as she was about to commence performing Tapas. Attracted by her great beauty, he engaged her in conversation. They developed feelings of love for each other. While they were conversing with each other, Brahma arrived there and told them to get married. Ṣankhachūḍa followed Brahma's direction and married Tulasi.

Their love for each other kept growing. Ṣankhachūḍa started to prepare to go to war against Indra* and the Dēvas. The Dēvas sent one Pushpadanta as an emissary to Ṣankhachūḍa to dissuade him

from attacking them. Ṣankhachūḍa paid no heed to Pushpadanta's advice, and confident in the power of the Kṛshṇa Kavacha, remained committed and eager to attack Indra. The Dēvas even brought Lord Ṣiva to help them in the war against Ṣankhachūḍa. As fiercely as Ṣiva fought, He could make no headway against Ṣankhachūḍa due to the protection afforded him by the Kṛshṇa Kavacha. Ṣiva then prayed to Lord Vishṇu and requested Him to take away the Kṛshṇa Kavacha from Ṣankhachūḍa. Vishṇu disguised Himself as a Brahmin, and sought refuge with Ṣankhachūḍa. Ṣankhachūḍa told the fake Brahmin to ask for anything and he would give it (*like Kshatriyas, the Asuras also respected Brahmins and would not deny any request from a Brahmin*). When the Brahmin asked for the armor, he gave it up without hesitation. As soon as he went back to the battlefield without his armor, Ṣiva was able to defeat him. His body was cremated but he was able to reconstitute his body from the ashes. He became Sudāma (*Kṛshṇa's close friend and companion; in one version of Ṣankhachūḍa's story, Sudāma became this Asura due to a Ṣāpa from which he was released when Ṣiva killed him*).

Ṣankhas (*conch shells*) formed from Ṣankhachūḍa's bones. *Ṣiva Purāṇa; Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Ṣankhanakha** – Son of Vajranābha. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣankhu** – A Brahmin who lived on the shores of the river Bāhuda. He had a younger brother named Likhita. Once, while Ṣankhu was away from the Āṣram, Likhita ate some fruits that were in the Āṣram and told Ṣankhu about it when he returned. Ṣankhu said eating his fruit during his absence amounted to theft and told Likhita to go to the king, confess his crime and receive

punishment. Likhita did so and on returning, showed his brother the stumps of his arms where his hands were cut off. Ṣankhu proclaimed that justice was served, blessed Likhita and told him to go and bathe in the river. When Likhita bathed in the river, his hands grew back. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sannati I** – Daughter of Daksha Prajāpati*. Wife of a Muni named Kratu and mother of the Vālakhilyas. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Sannati II** – Son of Alarka and father of Sunīta. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣānta** – Daughter of Emperor Daṣaratha. Since his friend and ally, King Rōmapāda (*of the neighbouring country of Anga*) was chiildless, Daṣaratha gave her to him as his adopted daughter. Daṣaratha announced a Swayamvara* for Ṣānta. Learning of this, Paraṣurāma (*Lord Vishṇu's sixth incarnation; he was a sworn enemy of Kshatriyas, the warrior caste, one of whom had killed his father*) arrived and drew his sword, threatening to kill Daṣaratha. Sage Vasishṭha, Daṣaratha's Guru and royal priest, begged Paraṣurāma to spare Daṣaratha. Paraṣurāma said he would spare Daṣaratha if he gives his daughter in marriage to a Brahmin. Daṣaratha agreed to the condition and gave Ṣānta in marriage to Ṛṣyaṣṛnga, a Sage. *Vichitra Rāmāyaṇa*

Once, when King Rōmapāda's kingdom suffered a severe drought, he invited Ṛṣyaṣṛnga to help. Rōmapāda gave his adopted daughter Ṣānta to him in marriage. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣāntakarṇa** – A king of the Andhra (*Telugu-speaking*) region. He was the son of Kṛshṇa (different from Lord Vishṇu's incarnation) and father of Pauramāsa. His dynasty ruled for a very long time. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣantanu** – Son of King Pratīpa of the Chandra Vamṣa (*lunar dynasty; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Sūrya, or solar*). He had an older brother named Dēvāpi and a younger brother named Bāhlika. Pratīpa narrated to Ṣantanu the story of how Ganga (*the divine female form of the heavenly, holy river*) expressed her love for him and how he asked her to marry his son instead of him. He then instructed his son to marry any woman he encounters on the banks of the Ganga river who expresses the desire to marry him. First King Pratīpa left for the forest to perform Tapas* and then Ṣantanu's older brother Dēvāpi also went away to the forest, leaving Ṣantanu as the king. A severe drought started as soon as Ṣantanu was coronated and continued for twelve years. Ṣantanu invited many Brahmins, and asked them why it has not rained for so long. The Brahmins proclaimed that the drought was being caused by the fact that Ṣantanu was made the king while an older, eligible prince was alive. Then the forests were searched and Dēvāpi was brought back. However, Dēvāpi had joined a band of heretics during his forest sojourn. The Brahmins, declaring that Dēvāpi was no longer qualified to be king, reinstated Ṣantanu to the throne. The drought then ended and normal rains started again.

Ṣantanu had the power to turn any old person into a youthful, vigorous one just by touching him.

One day, as Ṣantanu was strolling along the banks of the Ganga river, the river appeared to him as a woman (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*). Ṣantanu was sexually aroused at her sight. When he expressed his desire for her, she said "O! King! I will become your wife if you agree to abide by anything I

do and never criticize my behaviour. If you ever speak harshly to me, I will leave you immediately. Marry me if you agree to these terms." Ṣantanu accepted her terms in full and married her. Ganga became pregnant. As soon as she gave birth, she took the infant boy to the river and drowned him. Ṣantanu was devastated by her cruel action, however he abided by the terms of their agreement and did not remonstrate with her. Over time, she gave birth seven times and drowned each infant soon after he was born. An eighth son was then born. Unable to contain himself anymore, Ṣantanu said to her "You killed seven infants cruelly. I will not allow you to do the same thing this time." Saying "You broke your promise to me. Therefore, I have to leave you", she narrated her past story (see **Bhīshma**), handed her eighth son Bhīshma (*he was originally named Dēvavrāta; he got the name Bhīshma when he took a severe vow,'Bhīshma Pratigjna'*) to Ṣantanu after she and Sage Vasishṭha gave him a thorough education.

Once, while on a hunting trip, Ṣantanu saw an abandoned boy and girl, and brought them back to his palace, pitying their plight. They were named Kṛpa (*who, as an adult, came to be known as Kṛpācharya, the archery and martial arts Guru of the Kauravas and Pānḍavas*) and Kṛpi in view of the king's Kṛpa (*Sanskrit for 'kindness'*).

Once, while hunting on the banks of the Yamuna river *(present-day Jumna river*), Ṣantanu smelled a uniquely pleasing scent and following the scent, he saw a woman named Yōjana Gandhi (*means 'she whose scent can be smelled eight miles away', also known as Matsyagandhi*). Admiring her great beauty and instantly falling in love with her, he asked her who her parents were.

Learning that she was the daughter of Dāṣarāja, Ṣantanu went to Dāṣarāja and asked for Matsyagandhi's hand in marriage. Dāṣarāja said he would gladly oblige if Ṣantanu agreed to make her son the next king. Ṣantanu (*who already had a grown son, Bhīshma, by his former wife Ganga*) returned home disappointed and sad because he could not make that promise. His son Bhīshma, on learning the reason for his father's distress, went to Dāṣarāja and vowed that he will not seek to succeed to the throne and that he will ensure that Matsyagandhi's son will become Ṣantanu's successor (*and that he will remain a bachelor for life to make sure that he will have no sons that might seek the throne either*). Dāṣarāja then performed the marriage of Matsyagandhi (*known also as Satyavati*) to Ṣantanu. Ṣantanu and Satyavati had sons named Chitrāngada and Vichitrvīrya. Ṣantanu was King Mahābhishu in his previous life. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣānti** – Daughter of Dēvahūti and Kardama and the wife of Atharva. *Bhāgavata*

**Sapta Samudras** – (*Sapta is Sanskrit for 'seven'; Samudra means 'ocean'*) As Sūrya (*the Sun God*) revolved around the Mēru mountain (*regarded as the tallest mountain, taller than the Himālaya, at the northern end of the then known world*), the world was plunged into darkness whenever Sūrya was behind the mountain. King Priyavrata, hoping to light up the dark world, rode his chariot all over, while performing Tapas*. The areas in which he rode became the Sapta Samudras. *Bhāgavata*

A female cowherd named Viraja had seven sons by Kṛshṇa. While her sons were playing together, the youngest was hurt fighting with his older brothers, and came crying to his mother.

She left Kṛshṇa's side to take the youngest son back to where his brothers were playing. When she came back, Kṛshṇa disappeared. Blaming her sons for her separation from Kṛshṇa, she gave them a Ṣāpa* that they shall become oceans. They thus became the Sapta Samudras. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Ṣarabhanga** – A Muni. He lived in the Danḍaka forest (*covers parts of Chattisghar, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh states*). Pleased by the Tapas* performed by him, Indra* himself came to take him to Swarga (*heaven*). But Ṣarabhanga refused Indra's offer, having heard that Lord Rāma was traversing the forest, and desirous of meeting Him. Sīta, Rāma and Lakshmaṇa visited his Āṣram. Rāma asked him for suggestions on suitable places where they could stay a while. He suggested that they should go to another Muni, Sutīkshṇa. Having achieved his desire to meet Rāma, he created a fire by his spiritual power, immolated himself and reached Swarga. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣārada** – Daughter of a Brahmin. Her husband died of a snake bite the very day of her marriage. She removed all her bridal adornments and was crying bitterly. A congenitally blind old Brahmin named Dhruva came to her house at that time. She touched his feet and saluted him with a Namaskāra*. He blessed her saying "Be a happily married woman all your life!" She informed him that she had just become a widow. Acknowledging that he said what he did because of his blindness, he advised her, "Perform the Vrata* of Umā Mahēṣvara. My blessing will become true." He then detailed the procedure for the Vrata, which she performed with sincere devotion and strict adherence to his instructions. Goddess Pārvati (*Uma is one of Her many names*)

appeared and offered her a boon. Dhruva explained to Her the manner of his blessing of the young woman and requested Her to make his wish true. Pārvati then recounted Ṣārada's prior life story in these words "She was the second wife of a Brahmin in the country of Pāṇḍya (*a part of the modern state of Tamilnadu in south India*). Her husband was extremely fond of her and ignored his first wife entirely. The first wife died of unhappiness as a result of his neglect. A handsome young Brahmin man, falling in love with her beauty, tried hard to seduce her. She was a Pativrata* and did not allow him to come anywhere near her. He died pining away for her. That young man was her husband in this life. The snake that bit and killed him was the first wife of her husband in the previous life. Because she was the cause of the breakup of a marriage, she was widowed prematurely in this life. However, the Brahmin who was her husband in her previous life has been born again in the Pāṇḍya country. She will experience conjugal life with him in their dreams. A son will be born to her. Afterwards, he will take her to his home and they will live happily." After giving her this boon, Pārvati disappeared. In accordance with this boon, she was having sex with the man in their dreams. After a few days, she became pregnant. The people of the village were vilifying her for her lack of virtue and were about to punish her by cutting off her ears and nose. Then Ākāṣavāṇi* announced "She is a great Pativrata. If anyone casts aspersions on her virtue, their heads will explode." The people desisted from their plan. Bashful, she explained the whole story of the boon. A son was born to her. She was taken to a Tīrtha*, Gōkarṇa. The father of her son also came there. She recognised the man with whom she had been having sex

in her dreams among the many Brahmins who were present at the pilgrimage. He too recognised her as the woman with whom he had been having sex in his dreams. They acknowledged each other and the man took her and his son home and they all lived happily. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Ṣāradānḍāyani** – A king. His wife was Ṣrutasēna. Being childless for a long time, he instructed his wife to have a Kshētraja* son. His son thus born was Tardama. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣaradvanta** – Son of Sage Gautama. From an early age, he preferred to become proficient in archery rather than the Vēdas. He was performing intense Tapas* when Indra*, afraid of the consequences of the Tapas, sent a beautiful Apsara* named Jānapadi to disrupt it. On seeing her, Ṣaradvanta was overcome with sexual desire and spontaneously ejaculated. Ṣaradvanta left that place and went to another and continued his Tapas. His semen fell on the tip of an arrow standing vertically on the ground, split into two and became a boy and a girl. King Ṣantanu (*father of Bhīshma*), who was on a hunt nearby, saw the babies and took them home with him. The king named the boy Kṛpa and the girl Kṛpi. Some time later, Ṣaradvanta approached Ṣantanu, informed him that they were his children and taught archery to Kṛpa. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sarama I** – Daughter of a Gandharva* named Ṣailūsha and wife of Vibhīshaṇa (*younger brother of Rāvaṇa*). Even though she lived in Lanka* among the Asuras*, she had none of the evil qualities of Asuras. When Vibhīshaṇa left Lanka (*to join Rāma*), she did not go with him. Instead, she stayed in Lanka and was

friendly with Sīta. At one point, Rāvaṇa had someone bring a severed head to Sīta to frighten her by saying "We have killed Rāma. Here is His head." Just then, Sarama came to Sīta and revealed to Her that it was all Māya (*illusion*). *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sarama II** – Dog of the Dēvas. Indra*, as part of his preparation for killing two Asuras*, Vidyut and Suvidyut collected some cows to perform a cow sacrifice Yāga. In order to protect the cows from being stolen by Asuras, he put Sarama to work guarding the cows while they grazed. Some Asuras distracted Sarama by giving her some milk and stole the cows. Indra came and asked Sarama where the cows were. Having accepted a bribe from the Asuras, Sarama lied and told Indra that the cows lost their way. Indra's spies suggested that Sarama will tell the truth if she was kicked. Indra took the advice and kicked Sarama in the stomach. As a result of the kick, Sarama threw up the milk the Asuras fed her. Scared of the punishment she would have to face, Sarama ran to the Himālaya mountain. Indra chased her. Indra found the Asuras there and killed them. *Varāha Purāṇa*

Indra asked Sarama again where the cows he brought for the Yāga were. He demanded that she search for them. Sarama said she would look for the cows if her children can drink the cows' milk. Indra agreed.

Once, Sarama's children (*puppies*) went near where King Janamējaya (*great-grandson of Arjuna*) was performing a Yāga. Janamējaya's younger brothers beat them. Sarama complained to Janamējaya about the beating and said "Misfortune will befall those who thoughtlessly hurt poor creatures like us", and disappeared. Janamējaya performed Ṣānti (*religious rituals of*

*atonement*) to ward off any misfortune. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sāraṇa I** – A spy in the service of Rāvaṇa. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sāraṇa II** – Son of Rōhiṇi and Vasudēva. *Bhāgavata*

**Sārasvata I** – When the semen of Sage Dadhīchi was accepted by the Sarasvati river (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*), Sārasvata was the son born to her as a result. Sarasvati handed him over to Dadhīchi. However, after giving him the name Sārasvata, and informing her that Sārasvata had the power to prevent harm even from a severe drought, Dadhīchi returned him to Sarasvati. Once, when famine struck due to a twelve-year long drought, he saved Munis from starvation. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Sārasvata II** – A Brahmin. He was born in the city of Avanti. He shifted his family responsibilities to his sons, went to the forest and performed Tapas*. Pleased by his Tapas, Lord Vishṇu appeared to him and asked him to choose a boon. He asked for Sāyujya (*unity or merger*) with Vishṇu. Saying Brahma comes after Him, Vishṇu told Sārasvata that he would be born to Brahma and attain Sāyujya with Him. Vishṇu also told him that since he would constantly offer Nāra (*Sanskrit for 'water'*) to the Pitṛ Dēvas (*souls of one's ancestors*), he will be known as Nārada. Accordingly, Sārasvata was reborn as Nārada. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Sārasvata III** – A Brahmin. His son was Sōmavanta. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Sarasvati I** – Mind-born daughter of Lord Brahma. He married Her. They became the Ādi Dampatis (*Sanskrit for 'First Couple'*).

She was the embodiment of the arts and sciences. Her Vīṇa (*seven-stringed musical instrument, considered the first musical instrument in the world*) was named Kachhapi. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*

**Sarasvati II** – Wife of Sage Dadhīchi. Once, Indra* sent an Apsara* named Alambusa to disrupt Dadhīchi's Tapas*. As soon as he saw Alambusa, Dadhīchi had a spontaneous ejaculation. Sarasvati absorbed it and a son named Sārasvata was born to her as a result. Sarasvati gave the child to Dadhīchi saying "He is your son." The Muni gave the baby a loving kiss and handed him back to her. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*

**Sarasvati III** – A river originating in Brahma Saras (*Saras is Sanskrit for 'lake'*). This river, taking the form of a woman (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*), attended and was received with respect at seven Yāgas: One performed by Brahma; a Yāga performed by Munis in the Naimiṣa forest; one performed by Gaya; one performed by Uddālaka; the seventh Yāga performed by Sage Vasishṭha; one of Bṛhaspati's; and another one of Brahma's, under the names of Subhadra, Kanakākshi, Viṣāla, Suratanva, Ōghamāla, Suvēṇi, and Vimalōdaka respectively. She acquired the name Sapta Sārasvata as a result.

Once, Sage Viṣvāmitra called on the Sarasvati river for help in an attempt to deceive Sage Vasishṭha (*with whom he had a long-running feud*). She brought Vasishṭha along. While Viṣvāmitra went searching for a means of killing Vasishṭha, the river rose and carried Vasishṭha away. When Viṣvāmitra returned, Vasishṭha was not there. Suspecting that Sarasvati deliberately took Vasishṭha away to save him, Viṣvāmitra gave Sarasvati a Ṣāpa* that she

would become blood red. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sarasvati IV** – Wife of Lord Vishṇu, along with Ganga and Lakshmi. Once, while Vishṇu and His three wives were together, Ganga was staring at Vishṇu unblinkingly. At the same time, Vishṇu was also looking only at Ganga. Sarasvati, annoyed that Ganga was hogging their husband's attention, said harsh words to Ganga. Angered by Sarasvati's words, Ganga gave her a Ṣāpa* that she would become a river. Sarasvati gave Ganga the same Ṣāpa in return. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

Once, Brahma lied that He had seen the end of Ṣiva's Linga*. Ṣiva gave a Ṣāpa to Sarasvati, Brahma's Vāk (*voice*) that She would become a river (*there is a Trivēṇi Sangamam, Sanskrit for the 'confluence of three rivers' of which Ganga and Yamuna are visible, Sarasvati is the third, hidden or subterranean river*). *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Ṣaravaṇa** – A forest. This forest was a secret, romantic hideaway for Lord Ṣiva and His Consort Pārvati. Once, while they were making passionate love there, several men entered the forest. Pārvati, embarrassed at being seen by men during Her lovemaking, left. Angry that her lovemaking was interrupted, She put a spell on the forest that anyone coming within twenty miles of the forest will become female. Ila (*King Sudyumna*) happened to enter the forest and became a woman. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Sarayū river** – A river that flows by the city of Ayōdhya. There is a Saras (*lake*) in Kailāsa (*Lord Ṣiva's abode*) built by Brahma, named Mānasa. This river flowed as a stream from that Saras and is therefore named Sarayū. This river eventually joins the Ganga

river. Lord Rāma and Lakshmaṇa drowned themselves in this river to terminate their Avatāras (*of Lord Vishṇu and Ādi Ṣēshu, respectively*). *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣārdūla** – A spy in the service of Rāvaṇa. He crossed the ocean and covertly saw Rāma. He heard Sugrīva advising Rāma to invade Lanka* and informed Rāvaṇa of the plan. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣarmishṭha** – Daughter of the Asura* King Vṛshaparva. Once, she, along with Dēvayāni (*daughter of the Guru of the Asuras, Ṣukra*) and their companions, were bathing in a lake, leaving their clothes on the shore. While they were in the water, a gust of wind mixed up the women's clothes. Ṣarmishṭha came out of the lake first and put on Dēvayāni's clothes. Dēvayāni, coming out later, saw Ṣarmishṭha wearing her clothes and angrily shouted "You know I am a Brahmin girl! My father is the Guru of your father's dynasty. Do you expect me to wear clothes you discarded?" Retorting "Do you not know your father is my father's employee? Why are you so arrogant?", Ṣarmishṭha threw Dēvayāni into a nearby well and went home. Ṣukra and his daughter then left Vṛshaparva's city. Learning of their departure and the reasons for it, Vṛshaparva, wishing for the continued presence of Ṣukra in his city, sent his daughter Ṣarmishṭha to be Dēvayāni's maidservant as penance for her action. Ṣarmishṭha continued to serve Dēvayāni and went with her when Dēvayāni got married to Yayāti and went to her husband's house.

After Dēvayāni had a baby, Ṣarmishṭha requested Yayāti to give her also the gift of motherhood. Remembering that he swore to Ṣukra that he will not sleep with Ṣarmishṭha, he hesitated to grant her request. Saying lying about lovemaking is not a sin,

Ṣarmishṭha persuaded the king to have sex with her. She gave birth to a son. When Dēvayāni learnt of Ṣarmishṭha giving birth, she questioned Ṣarmishṭha as to how she, a virgin, had a baby. Ṣarmishṭha lied to her saying that the son of a Muni impregnated her. Ṣarmishṭha had sons named Druhvi, Anu, and Pūru, all by Yayāti. Her son Pūru succeeded Yayāti to the throne. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sarpas** – (*Also known as Nāgas**) Articulate serpents, born as the children of Sage Kaṣyapa and his wife Kadruva. Some of these were righteous. One example was Ṣēshu, who, afraid of being given a Ṣāpa* by Kadruva (see **Vinata**), performed Tapas* and supported the world on his back, per Brahma's wish. He also became the bed on which Lord Vishṇu reclined. Another was Vāsuki, who served as the rope around the Mandara mountain for the churning of the ocean of milk. Some Sarpas became Lord Ṣiva's soldiers. Some were used by Ṣiva as His neck ornaments. There was a separate world for Sarpas to live in, called Nāga Lōka.

The Sarpas had their step mother Vinata and her son Garutmanta* serving them. They used to ride around on Garutmanta for fun. They made an offer to Garutmanta that, if he brought Amṛtam* and gave it to them, they would release him and his mother from bondage. Garutmanta brought Amṛtam and placed it on a bed of Darbha (*a special dried grass used in religious observances such as Hōmas**). As the Sarpas went to take a bath in preparation for imbibing the Amṛtam, Indra* came and took the Amṛtam away. The Sarpas came after taking a bath and unaware that the Amṛtam had been removed from the Darbha, licked the grass (*which is very sharp*). Their tongues split as a result. *Mahā*

*Bhārata*

At one time, the Sarpas were famished, and came to their mother. The eldest of them said to her "We have been unable to find anything to eat. We will eat you." The youngest of them remonstrated that that was inappropriate. Hearing these words, their father Kaṣyapa came out. Afraid of him, all the Sarpas hid behind their mother. Kaṣyapa gave them Ṣāpas saying to them "Since you thought of eating your own mother, you will become Asuras and Niṣācharas (*Sanskrit for 'those who roam at night'*). Since you have been suffering from hunger, if a tooth of yours touches anyone, they will bleed." *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*

**Sarpa Yāga** – Takshaka, a Sarpa or Nāga* had bitten and killed King Parīkshit (*grandson of Arjuna and the sole surviving offspring of the Upapāṇḍavas*). Parīkshit's son Janamējaya harboured resentment against the Sarpas due to this. He vowed to exterminate the Sarpa species.

Takshaka also stole earrings from a Muni named Udanka (*disciple of Pyla. There were three different Udankas in the Purāṇas*). So, Udanka also nursed a grievance against Takshaka. Udanka approached Janamējaya and encouraged him to perform a Sarpa Yāga (*in which serpents are 'sacrificed', i.e., thrown in the sacred fire*).

There had also been a Ṣāpa* by Kadruva that Sarpas will be destroyed in a Sarpa Yāga. The cause of this Ṣāpa was as follows: After Vinata and Kadruva (*two of the wives of Kaṣyapa*) made a bet about whether or not there was a black spot on the tail of a horse, Kadruva requested her sons to make the horse's completely white tail appear black. They refused on the grounds that even

though their mother requested it, it was an immoral thing to do. Angered by their disobedience, Kadruva gave them a Ṣāpa that they will all die in the fire of Janamējaya. Some of the wiser Sarpas led by Vāsuki started pondering on how to avoid the threatened extinction. Some proposed that they would take the form of Brahmins and plead with Janamējaya to drop his planned Sarpa Yāga. Others suggested they can frighten everyone at the Yāga and make them scamper away. This proposal was opposed by the wiser heads because Brahmins can destroy the Sarpas which tried to disrupt the Yāga by sprinkling water sanctified by Mantras. While the arguments were going on, a Sarpa named Ēlāputra spoke up, saying "I was in mother's lap when she gave the Ṣāpa. I overheard a discussion between Brahma and the Dēvas on this matter. Brahma told them that Āstīka, son of Jaratkāru and her husband Sage Jaratkāru will stop the Yāga." With all these separate forces operating, Janamējaya started his Yāga. Sarpas were being driven by unseen forces to fall into the fire. Takshaka went to Indra* and begged his protection, winding himself around Indra's throne. Indra promised his protection. Āstīka, the Brahmin son of a female Nāga impressed Janamējaya with his erudition and persuaded him to stop the genocide. *Mahā Bhārata*

(*There is another unrelated story of a campaign of destruction of Sarpas, also in the Mahā Bhārata*) Pramadvati, the fiancee of a man named Ruru was bitten by a serpent and died as they were preparing to get married. For a while thereafter, Ruru exacted revenge on serpents by killing any serpent he came across. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣarva** – Son of Mīḍhāvamṣa and father of Indrasēna. *Bhāgavata*

**Sārvabhauma** – Son of Ahamyāti and husband of Sunanda, daughter of King Kēkaya. Their son was Jayatsēna. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sarvaga** – Son of Bhīma (*one of the Pānḍavas. Each of the Pānḍavas had at least one other wife for himself alone, in addition to Draupadi, whom they all shared*) and his wife Jalandhara. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sarvagata** – Son of Bhīma (*one of the Pānḍavas*) and his wife Kāḷi (*each of the Pānḍavas had at least one wife he did not share with his brothers, in addition to Draupadi, shared by all five*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sarvakāma** – Son of Ṛtuparṇa and father of Sudāma. *Bhāgavata; Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Sarvakarma** – A king of Saudāsa dynasty. As Paraṣurāma (*sixth incarnation of Lord Vishṇu*) was rampaging across the land killing kings, this king ran in fear of him and hid in the Āṣram of Sage Parāṣara (*father of Vēda Vyāsa*). Behaving like a Ṣūdra* rather than as a Kshatriya, he was performing every type of chore (*Sarva Karma, meaning 'all tasks' in Sanskrit*) for Parāṣara and thereby acquired the name Sarva Karma. Bhūdēvi (*Goddess earth*) asked Kaṣyapa to give him a kingdom. Kaṣyapa did so. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sarvarthi** – Wife of King Vatsara. Their sons were Pushpārṇa, Chandrakētu, Urṇu, Vasu, and Jaya. *Bhāgavata*

**Sarvatēja** – Son of King Vyushṭa and Pushkariṇi. Chāksusha Manu* was born to him and his wife Ākūti. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣaryāti I** – A king. Son of Vaivasvata Manu* and husband of Sthavishṭha. They had a daughter named Sukanya. One day, his

daughter accompanied him on a visit to Tapōvana*. Wandering around, she noticed two brilliant points of light on an anthill. Curious, she poked at them with a sharp stick. Blood flowed from the point where she poked. Soon after, Ṣaryāti's subjects were afflicted with a condition whereby they could not perform waste-elimination functions. Ṣaryāti, relizing that the calamity was caused by his daughter's action in the forest, returned to the anthill. After clearing the mud, he saw Sage Chyavana was under it. He saluted Chyavana with a Namaskāra* and begged his forgiveness for his daughter's thoughtless act. Chyavana said all will be forgiven if Ṣaryāti gives his daughter in marriage to him. Ṣaryāti agreed and married his daughter to Chyavana. After some time, Ṣaryāti, planning to perform a Yāga, went to Sage Chyavana's Āṣram to bring his daughter and son-in-law to the Yāga. He saw there beside his daughter, a young and handsome man instead of the old, blind Sage. He cried, assuming that his daughter was committing adultery by leaving her old husband and living in sin with a young man. Sukanya explained that the young man with her was, in fact, Sage Chyavana and narrated how the transformation occurred. Happy to learn that his daughter had not strayed from the path of virtue, he blessed her and took the couple with him. Chyavana officiated at his father-in-law's Yāga. The Aṣvini Dēvas (*twin physicians to the Dēvas*), who had been denied a share of Havya* by an edict of Indra*, were given their share of Havya in that Yāga. Ṣaryāti and his wife Sthavishṭha had sons named Samyāti, Ānarta, Uttānabarhi, and Bhūrishēṇa. *Mahā Bhārata; Bhāgavata; Matsya Purāṇa*

**Ṣaryāti II** – Son of Bahugata and grandson of Sudyutsa, of the

dynasty of Pūru. His son was Samyāti. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣaṣāda** – Eldest son of Ikshvāku (*Rāma was of his dynasty*). His original name was Vikukshi. Once, Ikshvāku sent him to the forest to fetch clean meat for the observance of a death anniversary. He went to the forest and hunted hawks. Being very tired, he ate one of the hawks and took the rest home. Sage Vasishṭha, divining that he had eaten one of the hawks, declared that the hawks were unsuitable for the ceremony because no one should eat some of the meat before it was offered to the spirits of the ancestors. Ikshvāku became angry with his son and expelled him from the city. Vikukshi acquired the name Ṣaṣāda because he had eaten a Ṣaṣa (*Sanskrit for hawk*). Ṣaṣāda succeeded Ikshvāku as king. His son was Puranjaya. *Vishṇu Purāṇa; Bhāgavata*

**Ṣaṣikaḷa** – Daughter of Subāhu, king of Kāṣi*. She fell in love with Sudarṣana, son of King Dhruvasindhu, having heard of his good qualities. Many princes came to her Swayamvara*. Some enemies of Sudarṣana, including Yudhājit, also came to the Swayamvara, intending to kill Sudarṣana. It appeared as if the Swayamvara might become a battlefield. Ṣaṣikaḷa's father advised her to choose someone other than Sudarṣana, but she would not listen. Subāhu announced to the assembled princes that the Swayamvara is postponed to the next day. That night, he performed Ṣaṣikaḷa's marriage with Sudarṣana. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Ṣāsti** – The son born to Lord Ṣiva and Jaganmōhini (*Lord Vishṇu's female form*). He protected the Gods from Asuras*. *Skānda Purāṇa*

**Ṣatabindu** – Father of Bindumati. He gave his daughter in marriage to Māndhāta. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣatadhanva I** – A king. Satrājit had first promised to give his daughter Satyabhāma to him in marriage, but he reneged and gave her to Lord Kṛshṇa. Ṣatadhanva initially did not consider it an insult. But Kṛtavarma and Akrūra approached him and asking "Why do you tolerate the insult to you by Satrājit?" and egged him on to kill Satrājit. Ṣatadhanva took their advice to heart and killed Satrājit while he was asleep. Satyabhāma was devastated at the loss of her father. Kṛshṇa went to war with Ṣatadhanva. Ṣatadhanva sought the help of Kṛtavarma and Akrūra but they refused to come to his aid. Ṣatadhanva alone then fought Kṛshṇa and was killed by Him. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣatadhanva II** – Son of Sōmaṣarma and father of Bṛhadratha. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣatadru** – A river (*name in Purāṇic times, now known as Sutlej*). After Sage Vasishṭha's one hundred sons were killed by Kalmāshapāda, Vasishṭha attempted suicide by jumping into this river. Trying to avoid touching his fiery hot body, the river flowed into a hundred rivulets. From that time, the river came to be known as Ṣatadru (*Sanskrit for 'flowing in a hundred streams'*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣatadyumna** – Son of Manu* named Chākshusha. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Ṣatagāmi** – Son of Jaṭāyu (*articulate, giant bird who tried to stop Rāvaṇa from abducting Sīta*). *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣatagōpa** – A cowherd. He was the brother-in-law of Nanda (*it was Nanda and his wife Yaṣōda who raised and protected Kṛshṇa from his evil uncle Kamsa*). Father of Rādha. (*Pānḍuranga Māhātmyam is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Pānḍuranga Māhātmyam*

**Ṣatahrada** – Wife of an Asura* named Jaya and mother of Virādha. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣatajit** – Son of Sahasrajit. His sons were Mahāhaya, Vēṇuhaya and Hēhaya. Kārtavīryārjuna was of his lineage. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣātakarṇa** – A Muni. He was performing intense Tapas* while eating nothing but the tips of Darbha grass (*used in many religious observances*) and taking baths in nearby lakes. Indra*, worried about the effects of the Tapas on his position, sent Pancha (*five*) Apsaras* to disrupt his Tapas. The Muni enjoyed life with the Apsaras in his house and the lakes. The lakes came to be known as Panchāpsara lakes. *Raghu Vamṣa*

**Ṣatānanda** – Son of Sage Gautama and his wife Ahalya. He was the court priest of King Janaka (*father of Sīta*). His son was Satyadhṛti. *Bhāgavata; Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣatānīka I** – Younger brother of King Virāṭa (*Abhimanyu's father-in-law*). He was killed in the Mahā Bhārata war by Bhīshma. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣatānīka II** – One of the Upapānḍavas (*collective name for the children of the Pānḍavas*). Son of Draupadi and Nakula. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣatānīka III** – Son of King Janamējaya (*great-grandson of Arjuna*). Ṣatānīka had two wives, Bhūmi and Vasumati. Being

childless for a long time, he had Sage Ṣāṇḍilya officiate at the Putra Kāmēshṭi Yāga* he performed. A son named Sahasrānīka was born to him after that. The son was also known as Aṣvamēdhadat. Ṣatānīka turned his kingdom over to his son and went away to Tapōvana*, but Indra* sought his help in a battle against Asuras*. He was killed in that battle. Indra's chariot-driver Mātali brought his body to earth. His wives performed funeral rights for him and immolated themselves on the funeral pyre. *Mahā Bhārata; Bhāgavata*

**Ṣatarūpa** – The Ṣakti (*Sanskrit for 'power' or 'energy', the natural form of the Supreme Being in the Vēdic religion, now called Hinduism*), half male and half-female, born from Brahma's mind. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Ṣataṣṛnga I** – An Asura*. He was the father of Sadama, Vidama, and Dama. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣataṣṛnga II** – A mountain (*Sanskrit for 'one hundred peaks'*). King Pānḍu performed Tapas* on the slopes of this mountain. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣatavali** – A chief in Sugriva's Vānara* army. In the search campaign to find Sīta, he went north. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣatāyu** – Son of Purūrava and the Apsara* Ūrvaṣi. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣatayūpa** – A royal Sage. He belonged to the Kēkaya dynasty. His Āṣram was in Kurukshētra (*where the Mahā Bhārata war took place*). When Dhṛtarāshṭra retired to the forest to live there and perform Tapas*, Ṣatayūpa welcomed him with his retinue to his Āṣram. His grandfather, King Sahasrachityu abdicated the throne

and installed his eldest son Ṣatadyuta and performed Tapas in the same place. Sage Nārada and other Munis visited Ṣatayūpa while he was in his Āṣram. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sati** – Eldest daughter of Daksha Prajāpati*. Her mother was Asikni. Sati married Lord Ṣiva. Daksha often invited Sati's sisters, treated them with respect and affection and gave them beautiful clothes. But, angry with Ṣiva for not giving him much respect, he never invited Sati. Sati stayed with Her husband a long time. However, missing Her sisters, She once went to Her father's house. Daksh asked her "Why did you come here? Your husband hates me and insults me. You are degrading my family's reputation and standing". He continued to berate Sati and abused Her husband. Deeply hurt by Her father's slandering of Her husband, and praying that Ṣiva be Her husband again if She shall be reborn, She created Yogāgni (*a fire by spiritual power*) and immolated Herself. She was reborn as Pārvati. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Satrājit** – Son of Nimna. One day, while bathing in the river, he prayed to the rising Sūrya (*the Sun God*). Sūrya was pleased by the prayer and gave him a special diamond called Ṣyamantaka. Kṛshṇa asked him several times to give the diamond to Him but Satrājit refused to give it up. Prasēna, brother of Satrājit wore it. As he was traversing a forest, a lion killed Prasēna and took the diamond. Satrājit assumed that Kṛshṇa killed his brother for the diamond. Kṛshṇa, to disprove the rumour, searched for the diamond Himself and obtained it from Jāmbavanta and returned it to Satrājit. On learning the entire story, Satrājit apologised to Kṛshṇa and gave Him the diamond as well as his daughter Satyabhāma in marriage. Kṛshṇa married Satyabhāma but told

Satrājit to keep the diamond. King Ṣatadhanva (*who had prior issues with Satrājit*) fought and killed Satrājit for the diamond. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣatrughāti** – Son of Ṣatrughna (*youngest half-brother of Lord Rāma*). He was coronated king of the city of Vaidiṣa. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣatrughna** – Son of Emperor Daṣaratha and his wife Sumitra (see **Rāma**). Ṣatrughna and Lakshmaṇa were full brothers but he was closer to his half-brother Bharata. All three half-brothers were totally devoted to Rāma. His wife was Ṣrutakīrti, daughter of Sīta's uncle. Their sons were Subāhu and Ṣrutasēna. *Bhāgavata*

After Lakshmaṇa was expelled from Ayōdhya, Ṣatrughna joined Rāma to drown himself in the Sarayu river and attained Mukti*. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣatrujit I** – Son of King Dhruvasindhu. His mother was Līlāvati. When King Dhruvasindhu died, an attempt was made to transfer the kingdom to Sudarṣana, the son of his step-mother. Līlāvati's father Yudhājit arrived there and claimed that Ṣatrujit should be crowned king because he was Dhruvasindhu's eldest son. A battle erupted between Sudarṣana's maternal grandfather and Yudhājit. Yudhājit won and Ṣatrujit became king. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Ṣatrujit II** – A king. Father of Ṛtadhwaja (*also known as Kuvalayāṣva*). *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Sātvata** – Son of Amṣu and grandon of Puruhōtra. Bhajamāna, Bhajadivya, Vṛshṭi, Dēvāpṛthu, Nandaka and Mahābhōja were his sons. *Bhāgavata*

**Sātvati** – Lord Kṛshṇa's paternal aunt and wife of Damaghōsha.

Śiśupāla was their son. When Śiśupāla was born, he had four arms and an eye in his forehead. After she heard Ākāśavāṇi* proclaim that when a certain person picks up the infant, his extra limbs will fall off and that that person will eventually kill Śiśupāla, Sātvati asked every visitor to pick up the baby. When she saw the extra limbs fall off when Kṛshṇa picked him up, she requested Kṛshṇa to forgive one hundred misdeeds by her son. Her second son was Sālva. *Bhāgavata*

**Satya** – Wife of Samyu and mother of Bharadvāja and Bharata. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Satyabhāma** – Daughter of Satrājit. Satrājit gave the Śyamantaka diamond, and also his daughter in marriage to Lord Kṛshṇa. She accompanied Kṛshṇa when He visited the Pāṇḍavas in the forest during their twelve-year exile. She said to Draupadi "All your husbands treat you well. Do you use drugs to affect their minds? Do you use Mantras?" These questions pained Draupadi. Draupadi told her that all she does is behave in a manner agreeable to her husbands and does not use any artificial means. Draupadi explained to Satyabhāma the way of life of a Pativrata*. She accompanied Kṛshṇa when He went to fight the Asura Naraka and hit Naraka with arrows.

When Arjuna informed her that Kṛshṇa had ended His Avatāra, she went to the Tapōvana*. *Bhāgavata*

**Satyadhṛti** – Son of Śatānanda, who was Ahalya's son. He was an expert in archery. One day, he happened to see the Apsara* Ūrvaśi, and spontaneously ejaculated. Kṛpi and her brother Kṛpāchārya (*archery instructor to the Kaurava and Pāṇḍava princes*) were

born from that semen. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Satyajit I** – He was Indra* in the Manvantara (*reign as Manu**) of Uttama, the third Manu (*the current Manu is the seventh*). *Bhāgavata*

**Satyajit II** – Younger brother of Drupada (*father of Draupadi*). When Arjuna came to capture Drupada (*at the behest of Drōṇa*), he fought Arjuna. Drōṇa killed him in the Mahā Bhārata war. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Satyaka** – Son of Ṣini, who is the son of Anamitra. His son was Sātyaki. *Hari Vamṣa*

**Satyakāma** – Son of a woman named Jabāla. In his boyhood, he went to a Guru to get an education. The Guru asked him what his Gōtra (*the name of a Muni to which each Brahmin can trace the origin of the male line of his family*) was. Satyakāma did not even know his father. He, therefore, went back to find out from his mother what his Gōtra was. Jabāla told him that he was born to her when she was very young and before she was married and she did not know his Gōtra either. She told her son to tell the Guru only that she always addressed him as Satyakāma. Satyakāma went back to the Guru, Hāridrumata, and told him what his mother said. The Guru performed Satyakāma's Upanayanam* ceremony. The Guru then gave Satyakāma some cattle (*cows and bulls*) and instructed him to take care of them, signifying that Satyakāma was his disciple (*it was the custom in ancient India for a boy accepted as a disciple to serve the Guru and perform chores assigned by the Guru for several years before the Guru starts to impart education. The idea was that education was a twin edged sword*

*and should be imparted only to someone who has convinced the Guru that he is of good character and will not misuse the knowledge he receives for evil purposes*).

Satyakāma took the cattle to the forest and tending them, stayed in the forest until the herd had grown to more than a thousand heads. Vāyu (*the God of Wind*) possessed one of the bulls in the herd. That bull said "O! Satyakāma! We are a herd comprising more than a thousand cattle now. Take us back to the Guru's house. We will teach you Brahma* Gjnāna (*knowledge of the Supreme Being*)." That bull taught Satyakāma one part of Brahma Gjnāna; Agni (*the God of Fire*) taught him one part; Sūrya (*the Sun God*) taught him another part; a (*articulate*) bird named Maddī taught him the remaining part. When he reached the Guru's house with the herd of cattle, the Guru said "I see a glow in your face that indicates you have learnt Brahma Gjnāna. Who taught it to you?" Satyakāma related what had happened while he was in the forest and said "The Dēvas have taught me Brahma Gjnāna, but it should only be taught by one's Guru. Please teach it to me." The Guru then taught Brahma Gjnāna to Satyakāma.

Satyakāma had a disciple named Upakōsala. The disciple also had learnt Brahma Gjnāna from the Agnis. Satyakāma asked him who had taught him Brahma Gjnāna. He then taught Brahma Gjnāna to his disciples. *Chāndōgya Upanishad*

**Satyakarma** – One of the kings of Trigarta. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Satyakarṇa** – Son of Chandrāpīḍa, son of King Janamējaya (*great-grandson of Arjuna*). He ruled Hastināpura. He turned his kingdom over to his son Ṣvētakarṇa and retired to Tapōvana*. *Hari Vamṣa*

**Sātyaki** – Son of Satyaka and grandson of Ṣini. Yuyudhāna was another of his names. Sātyaki was a constant companion of Lord Kṛshṇa and an ally of the Pānḍavas. When the Pānḍavas, after the end of their incognito year, were discussing their future course, he disagreed with the advice of Balarāma and said "The Kauravas are evil. There is no need to extend the courtesy of sending an emissary to deal with them. The proper course to pursue is to kill them and win the empire." He was very helpful to the Pānḍavas during the Mahā Bhārata war. When Drōṇa attempted to capture Dharmarāja, Sātyaki went to aid Dharmarāja. But Dharmarāja asked him to go help Arjuna instead. Sātyaki defeated several Kaurava warriors and killed King Jarāsandha (*different from the Jarāsandha killed by Bhīma with the help of Lord Kṛshṇa*). After Duṣṣāsana was defeated by him and retreated, Sātyaki fought Karṇa and Kṛpa. When he was exhausted after fighting so many warriors, King Bhūriṣrava attacked Sātyaki and knocked him down. Arjuna then went to his aid. Sātyaki recovered, fought and killed Bhūriṣrava. Sātyaki did not approve of unnecessary violence. He chastised Dhṛshṭadyumna (*son of Drupada, brother of Draupadi*) when he beheaded Drōṇa posthumously. He was about to strike Sanjaya as he was roaming in the battlefield, but Sage Vyāsa appeared, and forbid his action. He refrained from attacking the unarmed Sanjaya. Sātyaki's son was Jaya. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Satyaratha I** – Wife of Triṣanku. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Satyaratha II** – Father of King Dharmagupta. He was killed by King Durmarshaṇa in a war. *Brahma Purāṇa; Skānda Purāṇa*

**Satyasēna I** – Lord Vishṇu took birth (*not one of the ten incarnations collectively known as Daṣāvatāra*) with this name during the reign of Uttama Manu*. *Bhāgavata*

**Satyasēna II** – Sister of Gāndhāri. Dhṛtarāshṭra married her as well. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Satyasēna III** – Brother of the king of Trigarta. He was killed by Arjuna in the war. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Satyasēna IV** – Son of Karṇa. He fought in the Mahā Bhārata war and was killed by Nakula (*one of the twins, the two youngest of the Pānḍava brothers*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Satyaṣrava** – Son of Sumati of the dynasty of Narishyanta. His son was Uruṣrava. *Bhāgavata*

**Satyatapa** – A Bhil (*tribal*) man. He made his living by robbing travelers passing through the forest. One day, he threatened a Muni named Aruṇi, who was performing Tapas*. Even though he noticed the Bhil, Aruṇi kept meditating on God and did not move. Surprised, the Bhil thought to himself, "I have killed many people. Most people are afraid when they see me. I have never seen someone who was so unmoved, so unafraid of death, and so immersed in meditation." He told Aruṇi that he would give up his sinful ways, and requested him to teach him the way to attain Mukti*. Aruṇi, without responding to Satyatapa, got up and left. Satyatapa followed him and started serving him like a disciple. On their way, a tiger attacked them and was about to kill Aruṇi. Satyatapa killed the tiger. Grateful, Aruṇi told Satyatapa that he would attain Mukti if he always spoke the truth and never ate a Ṣakaṭa fruit. Satyatapa decided he would perform Tapas. Looking

for food to sustain himself while performing Tapas, he found only Ṣakaṭa trees wherever he looked. So he performed Tapas while starving. One day, Sage Durvāsa came to where Satyatapa was performing Tapas. He begged the Sage to let him provide a feast. Durvāsa stayed, wondering what kind of feast Satyatapa, who himself was starving, can provide. Satyatapa, now a Muni, prayed to Lord Ṣiva, who gave Satyatapa a diamond vessel. The vessel provided whatever its owner wished for. By its magic, Satyatapa provided a great feast to Durvāsa. Amazed by Satyatapa's Tapas and the results achieved through it, Durvāsa declared that the Bhil was a Satyatapa (*Sanskrit for 'one whose Tapas is true'*). The Bhil thereby acquired the name Satyatapa.

Once, while Satyatapa was cutting kindling for a sacred fire, the knife fell on one of his fingers and the finger fell to the ground. Immediately, the finger rose and attached itself to his hand. Some Kinnaras* who happened to be on the tree from which he was cutting kindling, went to Indra's* Sabha (*court*), and described the amazing occurrence they had witnessed. Desirous of testing the truthfulness of Satyatapa, Indra and Kṛshṇa disguised themselves as a wild boar and a hunter. The boar ran as if in fear of the hunter, and hid in Satyatapa's Āṣram. The hunter then came to Satyatapa and said "The boar I hit came to your Āṣram. Where is it?" Satyatapa was in a quandary because if he did not tell him what he knew, he would be guilty of lying; if he did tell him, he would be the cause for the boar losing its life. After mulling the situation over in his mind for a while, he prevented both undesirable outcomes by saying to the hunter "Sir, it was my eye that saw the boar, but the eye has no power of speech and my

mouth can tell you what you want, but the mouth did not see anything. How can the mouth tell you it saw what it did not see?" Impressed by his regard for truth, Indra and Kṛshṇa revealed their true forms and gave boons to Satyatapa. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Satyavanta** – Son of King Dyumatsēna. Chitrāṣva was another of his names. His father lost his kingdom and went to the forest. Satyavanta, therefore, grew up and studied in the forest while taking care of his blind father. A beautiful young woman, Sāvitri, the daughter of the king of Madra, was wandering in the forest, and fell in love with Satyavanta because of his virtuous behaviour. Her father performed her marriage to Satyavanta. Satyavanta, living a Brahmin lifestyle, was gathering kindling in the forest for the daily holy fire. Sāvitri had known, before her marriage, that Satyavanta had only a year to live after the marriage. The year being just about over, Sāvitri, sensing the time has come, accompanied her husband on his trip to gather kindling. He finished cutting enough kindling, and complaining of a terrible headache, rested with his head on Sāvitri's lap. She saw Yama (*God of Death*) come to take away her husband's life. As Yama was leaving with Satyavanta's life, she followed him stubbornly. Yama kept giving her boons such as that her father-in-law will regain his sight, that he will regain his kingdom, etc. hoping she would go away, but she kept following him. Sāvitri tricked him by asking for the boon of motherhood and Yama, in his desperation, granted the boon without realizing that being a Pativrata*, only Satyavanta can make her pregnant. Finally, Yama was forced to restore Satyavanta to life. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Satyavati** – Daughter of King Gādhi (*father of Sage Viṣvāmitra*).

Wife of Ṛchīka. Satyavati asked for a boon from her husband Ṛchīka that a son be born to her, and a son to her mother. Ṛchīka instructed that she should embrace a Mēḍi tree and her mother, a Rāvi tree. Forgetting the correct instruction, Satyavati embraced a Rāvi tree and her mother embraced the Mēḍi tree. When he found out that his wife and her mother reversed his instruction, Ṛchīka told them that Satyavati's son, though a Brahmin, would have the characteristics of a Kshatriya (*warrior or royal caste*). Satyavati, unhappy to be the mother of a Kshatriya, requested that her son's son rather than her own son, be the one with warrior qualities. Ṛchīka agreed to the modification of the boon. Thus it was that Satyavati's son by Ṛchīka was Jamadagni. Jamadagni had a son with Kshatriya qualities, Paraṣurāma (*Lord Vishṇu's sixth incarnation*). *Mahā Bhārata*

Satyavati went to the Himālaya mountain and ascended to Swarga (*heaven*) in her physical body due to her great virtue. She then flowed as the Kauṣiki river for the benefit of the world. *Bhāgavata*

**Satyavrata I** – Son of Tribandhana. He came to be known as Triṣanku. *Bhāgavata*

**Satyavrata II** – Sister of Gāndhāri. Dhṛtarāshṭra married her as well. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Satyavrata III** – Brother of Suṣarma, king of Trigarta. He and his brothers vowed that they will defeat Arjuna in the war and that if they returned after being defeated by Arjuna, they will be considered as committing the sins of killing a Guru, a woman, and a cow. They, of course, suffered defeat at Arjuna's hands. *Mahā*

*Bhārata*

**Satyavrata IV** – King of Draviḍa Country (*present-day south India*). Once, this king was performing the morning religious ritual on the banks of the Kṛtamāli river, with water in the palms of his hands. A fish fell into his hands. The (*articulate*) fish, which was the Matsya (*Lord Vishṇu's first*) Avatāra (*incarnation*) taught him the Purāṇas and the Vēdas. Satyavrata was reborn as the son of Vivasvata, named Ṣrāddha Dēva and became Vaivasvata Manu*. *Mahā Bhārata; Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Satyavrata V** – Son of a Brahmin named Dēvadatta. He could not learn even to read or write, despite all attempts. He was an idiot, due to a Ṣāpa* by Gōbila to his father. Finally, even his parents gave up efforts to give him an education, and abandoned him. He had the special quality that he always spoke the truth, because of which he was known as Satyavrata (*Sanskrit for 'dedicated to truth'*).

(*This Satyavrata and Satyatapa are different people. However, the following story is ascribed to both of them in different Purāṇas*) Once, as he sat performing Tapas*, a wild boar being pursued by a hunter ran to him. As the boar approached, a Mantra, Vāgbīja (*literally, 'the seed of speech or literature' in Sanskrit*) was heard by Satyavrata. The hunter then came to Satyavrata and said "The boar I hit came to your Āṣram. Where is it?" Satyavrata was in a quandary: if he did not tell him what he did know, he would be guilty of lying; if he did tell him, he would be the cause for the boar losing its life. He did not respond to the hunter's question but was silently chanting the Mantra he heard when the boar first arrived. Goddess Sarasvati, pleased by the way he saved

the boar's life without telling a lie, transformed him not only into an educated man, but a poet as well. He uttered his first poem in Sanskrit by saying to the hunter "Sir, it was my eye that saw the boar, but the eye has no power of speech. My mouth can tell you what you want, but the mouth did not see anything. How can the mouth tell you it saw what it did not see? Why do you keep asking me?" *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Satyayagjna** – Son of Pulusha. He had studied the Vēdas and Vēdāngas (*six auxiliary fields of knowledge, including Chhandas [Sanskrit for 'rules of poetry'] and Vyākaraṇa [Sanskrit for 'Grammar']*), but did not know the nature of Brahma* (*the Supreme Being*). He and another Vēdic scholar named Prāchīnaṣāla went to Sage Uddālaka hoping to learn about Brahma. *Chāndōgya Upanishad*

**Saubala** – Son of Uparicharavasu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Saubhaka** – Once, Sālva, brother of Ṣiṣupāla, with an intense desire to defeat Kṛshṇa and destroy the Yadu dynasty, performed Tapas* directed towards Lord Ṣiva. When Ṣiva appeared, he asked for a vehicle that could fly and be beyond the ability of Garutmanta* and Gandharvas* to outrun. Ṣiva commanded Maya* to construct such a vehicle in the shape of a city for Sālva. Maya accordingly built a metallic, city-like vehicle and gave it the name Saubhaka. Sālva with his army, mounted Saubhaka and attacked Dwāraka (*Kṛshṇa's city in the middle of the ocean*). A terrible battle ensued, but at the end, Kṛshṇa destroyed Saubhaka using his Gada (*mace*). *Bhāgavata*

**Saubhadra** – One of the five Tīrthas* known as Nārī Tīrtha.

*Mahā Bhārata*

**Saubhari I** – A Muni. He used to perform Tapas* while immersed in water. Watching the king of fish there enjoying the pleasures of family life, he decided he too wanted this kind of life. He went to King Māndhāta and asked for his daughters in marriage. The king told him that his daughters will not like an old man like him. Saubhari asked him "Let me go to your Antahpura*. I will marry them only if your daughters freely accept me." Saubhari, using his spiritual power obtained by his long Tapas, assumed a very handsome form and went to the Antahpura. All of Māndhāta's daughters loved him. Saubhari married them and again using the power of his Tapas, created golden palaces for them and lived a life of luxury, gratifying his desires, for many years. After some time, he felt guilty about the lifestyle which he, a Muni, had adopted. He and his wives then transitioned to the Vānaprastha state (*partial renunciation of worldly affairs*) and eventually returned to performing Tapas and attained Mukti*. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

Once, while Saubhari was performing Tapas immersed in water, Garutmanta* captured and devoured the king of fish in the lake. All the fish, mourning the death of their king, prayed to Saubhari. Taking pity on them, Saubhari proclaimed a Ṣāpa* that if Garutmanta ever again comes to that lake, he will die. *Bhāgavata*

**Saubhari II** – Friend of Dēvamitra. He studied the Ṛg Vēda. His son was Ṣākalya. *Bhāgavata*

**Saudhṛtēya** – Son of Sudhṛti and father of Kēvala. *Bhāgavata*

**Saugandhika** – An extremely fragrant flower. Once, Draupadi found one of these flowers and requested Bhīma, with whom she

was alone at the time, to get her more of the flowers. The lake which was the only place where these flowers could be found, was being guarded by Yakshas (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers*). Bhīma defeated them in a fight and brought the flowers to Draupadi. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣaulkāyani** – Disciple of Vēdadarṣa. He learnt the Atharva Vēda. *Bhāgavata*

**Saumini** – A Brahmin woman. After her husband died, she became an adulteress and was eating the meat of cows. Due to these sins, she was born as a Chhanḍāla (*untouchable*). Lacking any food, she was begging in the streets. She saw some devotees observing Ṣivarātri (*annual observance in which devotees fast all day and stay awake all night singing the praises of Lord Ṣiva*), and begged them for food. One of them gave her a garland of flowers. Saying "I cannot eat this!", she threw it away. The garland landed on a Ṣiva Linga*. Because she worshipped Ṣiva, albeit unwittingly, she attained Swarga (*heaven*). *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Ṣaunahōtra** – Son of Ṣunahōtra. Once, while he was performing a Yāga, Indra* visited him. Sensing an opportunity to ambush Indra when he was alone and unprotected, some Asuras* also came there. Seeing them, Indra changed his shape to look like Ṣaunahōtra. The Asuras instead captured the real Ṣaunahōtra. Scared, Ṣaunahōtra pointed out Indra to them. In later lives, Ṣaunahōtra was born as Gṛtsnamada and Ṣaunaka. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣaunaka I** – A Muni, of the lineage of Kapi. Once, as he and another Muni named Abhipratāri of Kakshasēna lineage were about to dine, a Brahmachari (*an unmarried man who practices*

*strict abstinence from sex and observes all religious rituals applicable to him*) came asking for Bhiksha*. At first, they did not offer him Bhiksha, uncertain whether he is well-versed in Samvarga (*the philosophy of resolution*). The Brahmachari then engaged in a learned discussion of Samvarga with Ṣaunaka. Satisfied, they offered him Bhiksha. (*There was a concept of Apātra Dāna in ancient India; the idea was that before donating or giving as a gift something of value, one has the obligation to ensure that the prospective recipient is qualified, by being learned and of good character, to receive the donation or gift*.) *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣaunaka II** – A Sage. Son of Ṣunaka and grandson of Gṛtsnamada. He performed a Yāga for twelve years in the Naimiṣa forest and listened to moral stories narrated by Sage Sūta. *Mahā Bhārata; Bhāgavata*

**Saurabhēyi** – An Apsara*. Apsaras Vanda, Samīchi, Budbuda, and Lata were her female companions. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣaushkala** – The royal priest in the Sabha (*court*) of Rāvaṇa. He once went to King Janaka to request him to give Sīta in marriage to Rāvaṇa. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sauvarṇa** – Wife of Prāchīnabarhi and mother of Prachētasas. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Savana** – Son of King Priyavrata, of Pushkara Dwīpa (*Dwīpa is Sanskrit for 'island'*). He had sons named Mahāvīta and Dhātaki. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Ṣavasta** – Son of Yavanāṣva. He built a city named Ṣāvasti. His

son was Bṛhadaṣva. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣāvasti** – (*also known as Ṣrāvasti*) The city built by Ṣavasta. *Bhāgavata*

**Sāvitri** – Daughter of King Aṣvapati as a result of a boon from Goddess Sāvitriī Dēvi. Her mother was Māḷavi. Being an only daughter, she grew up being pampered by her parents. When she reached marriageable age, her father told her to choose the man she wants to marry. She chose a handsome, young, well educated man of good character who lived in a nearby forest, named Satyavanta, son of Dyumatsēna. Satyavanta was eligible to marry her by virtue of his birth (*his father was a king who was defeated in war and driven out of his kingdom*) and character. However, Sage Nārada informed her father that the young man had just one year to live. Aṣvapati, saddened by this information, tried in many ways to convince Sāvitri to choose someone else as her husband. Sāvitri refused to consider anyone else, saying Satyavanta is already in her heart as her husband and she cannot think of any other. Aṣvapati invited Satyavanta and Dyumatsēna and performed the marriage of Sāvitri and Satyavanta. Sāvitri gave up the luxurious life she had enjoyed as a princess and accompanied her husband to his dwelling in the forest. She took to wearing saris woven from vegetable fibres and serving all the needs of her husband and his parents. The end of Satyavanta's lifespan, as predicted by Nārada, was very close. With just four days remaining, she started Upavāsa (*a fast*)) and a Vrata*. Satyavanta, per his normal routine, was going to collect flowers and kindling for the sacred fire. That day, Sāvitri told him she would accompany him. He argued against her coming along saying "You

are weakened by your fasting. You will not be able to walk in the forest." She insisted on going along, saying "I am your Ardhāngi (*half the body*). I cannot be away from you." Satyavanta climbed a tree and after plucking a few pieces of kindling, complained of a severe headache. Sāvitri had him lie down with his head on her lap. She realized that the time of his death was fast approaching. Just then Yama (*the God of Death*) arrived to take Satyavanta. She rose, and after greeting Yama with a Namaskāra*, said "Sir, you look like a divine being. Who are you?" Yama replied "I am Yama. I came to take the life of your husband. His lifespan has ended. Leave him and go home.", and proceeded to leave, with Satyavanta's life in his hands. Sāvitri kept following him. Yama looked back and said "What is this? Sāvitri! The path I will travel is very difficult terrain. You cannot handle it. Go!" Sāvitri said "Sir, how can a wife leave her husband and go? I will go wherever my husband goes." Yama said "Ask for any boon other than your husband's life. I will grant it." Sāvitri said "My father-in-law is blind. Please restore his sight." Yama granted the wish. Sāvitri continued to walk right behind Yama. Yama turned his head and said "Why are you still following me? Ask another boon." She said "My father-in-law lost his kingdom. Please restore his kingdom." Yama said "I grant that wish. Now go home. You cannot come any further." She kept going with him. She next had Yama grant a boon that her father will have sons. She still did not turn back. She told him she could not return without her husband. As a last wish, she asked for a son as a boon. By now thoroughly irritated, Yama granted the wish, without realizing the implication. Sāvitri pointed out to him that as a Pativrata*, the only way she could have a son

is if her husband is alive. Caught in a bind (*a boon, once granted, cannot be rescinded*) and impressed by Sāvitri's devotion to her husband, Yama agreed to restore Satyavanta's life. Satyavanta immediately sat up as if waking up from a deep sleep. Husband and wife went home happily. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sēnābindu** – King of the city of Dēvaprastha. He opposed Arjuna who was on a tour of Digvijaya (*meaning 'Victory in all directions', tour of world conquest*), but was defeated. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sēnājit** – A king. Once, as he was grief-stricken, after intensive self-examination, he came to the realization that "The feeling that we are hurting someone or we are suffering is due to ignoring the effect of the passage of time. Every thing depends on the march of time. Therefore, a wise man does not let sadness overcome him." *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣēshu** – Son of Kadruva. A Nāga*. (*Ṣēshu, specifically, was a huge multi-hooded serpent on which Lord Vishṇu rests while on the ocean*). His father was Kaṣyapa. When he learned of the injustice done to his step-mother by his mother and brothers (see **Vinata**), he was disgusted and left them. He performed Tapas* directed towards Brahma. Brahma appeared to him and told him that he would always be truthful and honest, and bade him to bear the weight of the earth and to ally himself with Garutmanta* (*a natural predator of all serpents except Ṣēshu*). Ṣēshu accordingly took the burden of the earth on himself. *Mahā Bhārata*

Ṣēshu lived in Swarga (*heaven*), and guarded the entrance to Lord Vishṇu's abode. Once, Vāyu (*the God of Wind*) came and

attempted to enter Vaikunṭha. Ṣēshu refused him entry. Vāyu, saying "I came to visit Lord Vishṇu. Who are you to stop me?", tried to force his way in. When Ṣēshu pushed him out, a fight broke out between them, each trying to prove he is stronger than the other. Hearing the ruckus, Vishṇu came out and said "Why fight to establish who is stronger? Ṣēshu will coil himself around the Vēnkaṭādri (*mountain named Vēnkaṭa, Sanskrit for 'removes sin'; one of the Saptagiri, or seven mountains of Tirupati*). Vāyu should then try to move the mountain. If he cannot move it, Ṣēshu is stronger." They agreed to the terms and went to the mountain. Ṣēshu coiled himself around the mountain and held his breath. Vāyu was able to move the mountain a good distance by blowing as a fierce wind. Ṣēshu, defeated and dispirited, did not want to go back to Swarga. He chose to stay there and became Ṣēshādri (*another of the seven hills*). (*Vēnkaṭāchala Māhātmyam is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Vēnkaṭāchala Māhātmyam*

**Ṣibi I** – Son of Prahlāda (*son of the Asura* Hiraṇyakaṣipu, but a devotee of his father's arch-enemy, Lord Vishṇu*). *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Ṣibi II** – Son of Uṣīnara. His mother was Mādhavi (see **Gālava**). His kingdom was Uṣīnara, named for his father. He was such a good ruler that he had no enemies in his or any neighbouring island. His subjects were happy. Lord Ṣiva, appreciating his goodness, granted him unlimited wealth. He performed many Aṣvamēdha Yāgas*. He was very famous for ensuring the safety of anyone seeking his Ṣaraṇu*. Once, to test him on his diligence in protecting those who sought his Ṣaraṇu, Indra* and Agni assumed the forms of a hawk and a pigeon and in the vicinity of a Yāga he was performing, acted out a scene of the hawk killing and eating

the pigeon. The pigeon begged Ṣibi for his protection. Ṣibi gave it his assurance of safety. Then the hawk approached him and asked "You are a just ruler. Why are you unjustly depriving me of my food by protecting this pigeon?" Ṣibi said "The pigeon sought my Ṣaraṇu and I promised to save it. Since you are seeking a meal, ask me for some other food and I will see that you get it." The hawk wished for an amount of Ṣibi's flesh of the same weight as the pigeon. Ṣibi put the pigeon on one side of a weighing scale and started cutting up flesh from his thigh and placing it on the other side. As much of his flesh as he put in, the pigeon still outweighed it. As he continued to cut his flesh up, Indra and Agni assumed their true forms and praising Ṣibi for his unselfish behaviour, made him whole again and left. Ṣibi had sons named Vṛshadarpa, Suvīra, Madra, and Kēkaya. *Mahā Bhārata; Bhāgavata*

**Siddhārtha** – One of the ministers of King Daṣaratha (*Lord Rāma's father*). *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Siddhāṣram** – Lord Vishṇu performed Tapas* here. When Kaṣyapa performed Tapas and Vishṇu appeared before him, he asked that Vishṇu be born as his son. Vishṇu agreed and took birth as Vāmana (*fifth incarnation of Vishṇu. The first fully human one*). Because this was where Kaṣyapa's Tapas accomplished Siddhi (*final beatitude*), it acquired the name Siddhāṣram. Sage Viṣvāmitra narrated this story to Rāma. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣīghra** – Son of Agnivarṇa and father of Maru. He was well versed in the art of Yōga and lived in the village of Kalāpa. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣīghraga** – Son of Sampāti *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Ṣikhanḍi I** – Wife of Antardhāna and mother of Havirdhāna. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Ṣikhanḍi II** – Daughter born to King Drupada. Her parents announced that a son was born to them, and raised her as a boy (*they were advised to do so in accordance with a boon Amba received from Lord Ṣiva*). Ṣikhanḍi was tutored in all subjects appropriate for a prince, including archery by Drōṇa (*Guru of the Kaurava and Pānḍava princes*). As she grew up into a young woman, the pretence was maintained to the point that a marriage with the daughter of King Hēmavarma of the country of Daṣārṇa was performed in absentia (*a practice allowed in royal families, where a sword is used to symbolize the bridegroom*). At their very first meeting, the bride discovered that her 'husband' was a woman and informed her maidservant. The maidservant informed Hēmavarma, who then questioned King Drupada about his 'son-in-law's' gender but did not receive a response. Hēmavarma then invaded Drupada's city with his army. Drupada and his wife went into hiding. Ṣikhanḍi went into a forest and prepared to immolate herself in a fire. A Yaksha (*semi-divine beings with magical powers, ruled by Kubēra, the God of Wealth*) named Sthūlakarṇa who lived there asked "Sir, why are you trying to kill yourself? Tell me what you need and I will help you." She explained the situation she had found herself in and that becoming a man was the only way she can be saved. The Yaksha, using his magical powers, gave his maleness to her and became a woman. Ṣikhanḍi went home and explained to her parents how she is now a man. The parents proved their offspring's maleness to the king of Daṣārṇa using civilized procedures. The now male Ṣikhanḍi provided major

assistance to the Pāṇḍavas in the Mahā Bhārata war. Bhīshma had vowed to never fight eunuchs or women. The Pāṇḍavas were aware of this. They requested Ṣikhanḍi to go and attack Bhīshma. Ṣikhanḍi challenged Bhīshma on the battlefield, with Arjuna shooting arrows from behind him. As soon as Bhīshma saw Ṣikhanḍi, he threw down his weapons and was hit by Arjuna's arrows. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣikhanḍi III** – Son of Anamitra. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣikhanḍi IV** – Son of Ṣūra. Grandson of Vidūratha. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣikhanḍini I** – Wife of Vijitāṣva. The Trētāgni (*three sacred fires*) named Pāvaka, Pavamānasa, and Ṣuchi were born to them. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣikhanḍini II** – Wife of Arthi and mother of Havirdhāna. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Ṣila** – A king. Son of Pāriyātra. His chest was hard as a stone slab. He was enjoying youthful pleasures in excess, but grew old before he was satiated. His son was Unnābha. *Raghu Vamṣa*

**Ṣilāda** – A Muni. Wishing for a son not born of a woman, he prayed to Lord Ṣiva. He also desired that the son must be a constant devotee of Ṣiva and that if the son ever deviated from devotion to Ṣiva, he would kill his son. Ṣiva acceded to the request and summoned the primordial bull named Dharma and instructed him to be born as Ṣilāda's son. One day, as Ṣilāda was tilling the soil, a bull calf Nandi was found in the ground. He took him home and raised him. Thus Nandi (*the articulate bull that is Ṣiva's transport*) himself became Ṣilāda's son. (*Ṣrīṣaila Māhātmyam is a*

*'Sthala Purāṇa'*) Śrīśaila Māhātmyam*

**Ṣilaka** – Son of Ṣalāvanta. *Chāndōgya Upanishad*

**Sīmantini** – Daughter of King Chitravarma. Her father, who adored and pampered her, showed her horoscope to some astrologers. One Brahmin told him that she would become a widow. The grief-stricken father determined to keep the prophecy secret from his daughter. But somehow Sīmantini did find out. She was worshipping Lord Ṣiva every Monday, while fasting the whole day. She was given in marriage to a prince named Chandrāngada. Chitravarma had his son-in-law and Sīmantini stay in his palace, guarding them against any danger. One day, Chandrāngada boarded a boat and went sailing in the ocean. As soon as he entered the ocean, a violent wind blew and the boat capsized. Chandrāngada did not return home. The news that he had died spread across the land. Enemy kings invaded Chitravarma's country. Even though grief-stricken, Sīmantini continued to worship Ṣiva. When his boat sank, Chandrāngada was taken to Nāga* Lōka by serpents. Takshaka, the ruler of the Nāgas, who was a friend of King Chitravarma, welcomed Chandrāngada to his world. He sent a message to Chitravarma that his son-in-law was in his land and that he would come home soon. Chandrāngada returned home. Seeing Sīmantini among her companions, he asked her "Who are you and why are you mourning?" He had recognised her but she did not immediately recognise him. Once she realized it was Chandrāngada, she rejoiced that by the grace of Ṣiva, her husband had been restored to her.

To celebrate the happy reunion with her husband, she was giving valuable gifts to married couples. Two young men, going about to

earn some wealth, posed as a couple with one friend dressed as a woman and went to Sīmantini. She honoured them, assuming they were husband and wife, and gave them many gifts. The man she took to be a woman then became a woman. They and their parents were upset by this turn of events, but because a Pativrata* like Sīmantini saw them as a couple, they remained husband and wife. *Skānda Purāṇa; Brahma Purāṇa*

**Simhabala** – Also known as Kīchaka. Brother-in-law of King Virāṭa. He was extremely strong (*his name means 'strong as a lion' in Sanskrit*). One day, while visiting his sister Sudhēshṇa, he saw Draupadi (*who, along with her husbands, was incognito. Her name during the incognito year was Mālini. No one in Virāṭa's kingdom knew that she was Draupadi or that the five men who arrived in the kingdom at about the same time were her husbands, the Pānḍavas, until the end of the incognito year*), and lusted for her. He spoke to Sudhēshṇa about his desire for her. Sudhēshṇa tried to reason with him and persuade him that it was wrong for him to want a woman that was not his wife which only increased the intensity of his desire for Mālini. He tried to force himself on her. He was willing to risk his life itself to make love to her. Sudhēshṇa finally felt sorry for his emotional plight and agreed to send Mālini to his quarters. Using the fact that the best selection of wines in the palace were in Simhabala's quarters, she asked Mālini to go and bring some wine for her. While Mālini was there, Simhabala attempted to embrace her. Freeing herself, she ran to the king's Sabha (*court*) and complained about the sexual assault by Simhabala. The Pānḍavas, all there in disguise, decided they have to kill Simhabala and made plans. The next day Simhabala went

back to Sudhēshṇa's palace and tried to woo Mālini. This time though, acting on the plan, Mālini pretended to love him as well, and told him she would come to a specific, lonely place after dark that evening. Excited and happy with anticipation of the fulfillment of his desire, he prepared a bed at the arranged rendezvous. That night Bhīma dressed himself in women's attire and waited on the bed Simhabala had prepared. Simhabala came and eagerly embraced the female figure on his bed. He immediately realized he had been tricked. He and Bhīma wrestled fiercely. Bhīma killed him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Simhaḷa** – An island (*used to be called Ceylon, now called Ṣrī Lanka*). This island was formed when the sons of Sagara dug up Jambūdwīpa (*the Indian subcontinent*) searching for the sacrificial horse of their father's Yāga. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Simhavaktra** – An Asura*. He was born to Surasa and Sage Kaṣyapa. Tāraka and Ṣūrapadmāsura were his brothers. *Skānda Purāṇa*

**Simhika I** – Sister of Hiraṇyakaṣipu and wife of Viprachitti. Ṣalya, Nabha, Vātāpi, Ilvala and Namuchi were their sons. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Simhika II** – Daughter of Hiraṇyakaṣipu and mother of Rāhu. *Bhāgavata*

**Simhika III** – Daughter of Dharaṇi and Daksha Prajāpati*. One of the wives of Kaṣyapa. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣimṣumāra** – A king and father of Bhrama. He gave her in marriage to Dhruva. *Bhāgavata*

**Sindhudwīpa I** – The Asura* Vṛtra in a prior life. While he was performing Tapas* with the ambition of defeating Lord Ṣiva, the river Vētravati came in a human female form (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*). He fell in love with her and she reciprocated. A son named Vētra was born to them. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Sindhudwīpa II** – A king. Son of Pārṣva. A female Asura* named Māhishmati was in love with him. Once, Sindhudwīpa happened to see a beautiful woman, Vidyunmati, bathing naked in a lake and experienced a spontaneous ejaculation. Māhishmati, who was in the form of a female buffalo (*due to a Ṣāpa**) at the time, drank water from the lake with Sindhudwīpa's semen in it. The Asura Mahisha was born to her as a result. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Sindhudwīpa III** – Son of Nābhāvara and father of Ayutāyu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣini I** – Son of Yādava King Yudhājit. His brother was Anamitra. As he was bringing Dēvaki to be married to Vasudēva, Sōmadatta attacked him. Ṣini defeated and humiliated Sōmadatta, and gave Dēvaki in marriage to Vasudēva. *Bhāgavata; Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣini II** – Son of Vidūratha and father of Bhōja. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣini III** – Son of Anamitra and father of Satyaka. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣini IV** – A king. He was the son of Garga and grandson of Manyu. His son was Gārgya. After Gārgya, the family became Brahmins. *Bhāgavata*

**Siriyāḷu** – Son of a Vaiṣya (*merchant caste, third in the caste hierarchy, below Brahmin and Kshatriya [warrior/princely]*)

named Chirutonḍa. His mother was Tiruvenganānchi. The couple were devotees of Lord Ṣiva. Siriyāḷu was also a devotee of Ṣiva, and respected and obeyed his parents. They never would eat a meal until at least one ascetic ate a meal as their guest. One day, no one came to their house. Chirutonḍa scoured the streets looking for an ascetic to be their guest. After a long search, he found an old, sick couple.

He invited them to his house. They told him that they were devotees of Lord Ṣiva, they had performed a rite of worship of Ṣiva, they needed to conclude the rite, and that if they come to his house, he should give them whatever they asked for. Chirutonḍa happily promised to do as they asked. They told him that he must cook and serve his son's flesh. If his wife does not agree to this, their rite would be ruined, and therefore, he should go home and ascertain that his wife will go along. Chirutonḍa went home and related their demand to his wife. She asked him to tell them she is willing to give them her own and her husband's flesh as well if they should so desire. Even though unaware that the old couple were Lord Ṣiva and Pārvati who came to test his devotion, he carried them on his shoulders to his house. Ṣiva, in a different disguise, then went to Siriyāḷu and said "Your father is about to kill you. He intends to serve your flesh to some guests. Come with me. I will save your life." Siriyāḷu refused his offer, saying "If my flesh provides satisfaction to my parents' guests, I will be Dhanya (*blessed*). My life would have served a noble purpose. Let my father do as he intends. I will not come with you. Go away." Then he washed himself. Chirutonḍa then killed him, cooked his flesh and served it to the old couple. The guest then said, "Is there not a

son in your house? We do not eat in a house where the hosts do not have a son." Chirutonḍa said, sadly, "I killed our son and served his flesh per your request. I do not have a son any more." The guest asked Chirutonḍa to call out his son's name loudly. Chirutonḍa shouted, "Siriyāḷu!" Siriyāḷu, alive by the grace of Ṣiva, came in from the street and saluted his father with a Namaskāra*. Lord Ṣiva and Pārvati showed their true forms and praised Chirutonḍa and his wife for their respect for guests and their devotion. They revealed Chirutonḍa's previous life and also that Siriyāḷu was actually Kumāraswāmi (*son of Lord Ṣiva, also known as Muruga or Shaṇmukha*). *Hara Vilāsam*

**Ṣiṣira I** – Son of Vasu named Sōma (*also known as Dhīra*). *Vishṇu Purāṇa; Matsya Purāṇa*

**Ṣiṣira II** – Disciple of Ṣākalya. He taught the codified Ṛg Vēda to Jātukarṇi. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣiṣunāga** – He succeeded Nandivardhana, of the lineage of Bṛhadratha, as king. His son was Kākavarṇa. Nandivardhana, father of Mahānandi was of his lineage. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣiṣupāla** – Son of Damaghōsha. His mother was Lord Kṛshṇa's paternal aunt Sātvati. He was Hiraṇyakaṣipu and Rāvaṇa in previous lives (see **Jaya**). He was born with four arms and an eye in the middle of his forehead. His parents were scared when they saw his weird shape. Ākāṣavāṇi* proclaimed that the eye in the forehead and the extra arms will fall off when he is picked up by a certain person and added that that person will eventually kill him. In view of this, whenever anyone visited the family, they were requested to pick up the child in their arms. One day, Kṛshṇa and

His brother Balarāma came to visit their aunt. Sātvati handed the boy to each of them. When Kṛshṇa picked him up, the extra eye and arms fell off. Remembering the words spoken by Ākāṣavāṇi, Sātvati realized that her son will die at the hands of Kṛshṇa. She said "O Kṛshṇa! This boy might turn evil and try to harm you. However, since he is your cousin, please forgive a hundred of his misdeeds." Kṛshṇa consented to her plea. Ṣiṣupāla thus became immune to death from anyone other than Kṛshṇa and from Kṛshṇa Himself until Ṣiṣupāla commited one hundred misdeeds. Ṣiṣupāla turned out as evil as his mother had feared. He killed King Bhōja without any provocation. When Vasudēva was performing a Yāga, Ṣiṣupāla ruined it by capturing and killing the sacrificial horse. While Kṛshṇa was away, he burned down His city, Dwāraka. He tried to marry Rukmiṇi (*considered to be the incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi*), with the help of her brother Rukmi, before she became Kṛshṇa's Consort. He abducted the wife of Babhru and made her his own wife. Watching all these depredations, Kṛshṇa bided His time, keeping count and honouring His promise to His aunt.

When Dharmarāja was performing the Rājasūya Yāga*, Bhīma came to conquer Chēdi, Ṣiṣupāla's kingdom. Ṣiṣupāla received Bhīma with honour, gave him gifts of money for the Yāga, and attended the Yāga (*the uncharacteristic good behaviour was probably to ensure an invitation to the Yāga*). Bhīshma proclaimed, in the royal Sabha (*court*), that only Kṛshṇa was eligible to be the guest of honour. Saying someone of the Yādava (*cowherds, Ṣūdra**) caste was ineligible for any honour, Ṣiṣupāla harshly criticized Kṛshṇa and Bhīshma. Kṛshṇa used His Chakra*

to sever Ṣiṣupāla's head right there in the royal court. Ṣiṣupāla's body fell to the ground. His Tējas* rose from the body and merged with Kṛshṇa. Ṣiṣupāla's son was Dhṛshṭakētu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sīta** – Wife of Lord Rāma (*the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishṇu*). She was the incarnation of Lakshmi (*the Goddess of Wealth. Consort of Vishṇu*). Janaka, childless for a long time, planned to perform a Yāga to beget children. As he was tilling the soil in preparation for the Yāga, the plow uncovered a golden chest. A baby girl was found in the chest. Happy that his objective of becoming a father was fulfilled already, he named the baby Sīta, and pampered Her with great love and affection. Sīta thus became King Janaka's daughter, born as Ayōnija (*without passing through a birth canal*).

As Sīta reached marriageable age, Janaka vowed that he would give Her in marriage only to a prince who is able to string the bow of Lord Ṣiva, which was his family heirloom. Every prince who heard about Sīta's great beauty and Her sterling character came and attempted to string the bow but could not even lift it. At the time, Sage Viṣvāmitra had taken Rāma and Lakshmaṇa with him to kill Asuras* including Tāṭaka. He then came to Mithila, Janaka's capital, accompanied by Rāma and Lakshmaṇa after those tasks were completed. Viṣvāmitra himself showed the bow to Rāma and asked Him to string it. Rāma did not come with the Sage intending to get married, but complying with the Sage's suggestion, He lifted the bow. As He was stringing it, the bow broke into pieces, making a tremendous noise. All the people present were very happy that it was Rāma who, in accordance with Janaka's criterion, won the hand of Sīta. Janaka sent an invitation to Daṣaratha, welcomed him

to Mithila and performed Sīta's marriage to Rāma. Sīta then accompanied Rāma to Ayōdhya.

Sīta was very happy in Ayōdhya. Her uncle's daughters were given in marriage to Rāma's brothers. All of them lived in luxury in their new home. Preparations were being made for the coronation of Rāma as the crown prince. Sīta had taken the Mangaḷa Snāna (*ceremonial bath*) and was bedecked with beautiful ornaments. The ceremony was scheduled to take place the next day. Suddenly, there was a hitch. Kaikēyi (*Daṣaratha's youngest and favourite wife*) demanded that Rāma be exiled to the forest for fourteen years (*calling in two boons granted to her in the past by her husband*), and that her son Bharata be crowned instead. Rāma informed Sīta that He was leaving for the forest. Sīta insisted on accompanying Him in spite of Rāma's warnings that She would not be able to endure the vicissitudes of life in the forest. She said "It is not proper for wives to be apart from their husbands." Lakshmaṇa (*closest of Rāma's brothers to Him*) also accompanied them. The three of them abandoned their royal silk clothes, put on garments made of vegetable fibres and set out on foot.

Sīta, Rāma, and Lakshmaṇa crossed the Ganga river and entered the forest. They visited the Munis in the forest, spending a few days in the Āṣram of each Muni. They stayed for some time in the Āṣram of Sage Atri. Sīta narrated to the Sage's wife Anasūya, the story of Her wedding. Anasūya gave Sita her Āṣīrvāda (*blessing*), and explained wifely duties to Her. They went from there to Sage Agastya's Āṣram. Learning from Agastya that a place called Panchavaṭi on the banks of the Gautami river will be suitable for

their stay, they went there and built a cottage. Sīta would cook whatever food Rāma and Lakshmaṇa gathered in the forest. Whatever hardships they encountered did not bother Sīta at all.

Ṣūrpaṇakha (*sister of Rāvaṇa*) saw Rāma and Lakshmaṇa and instantly fell in love with them. She expressed her desire to them. When they both rejected her advances, she started to harass Sīta. With Rāma's permission, Lakshmaṇa cut off her nose and ears. Crying with pain and humiliation, Ṣūrpaṇakha went and told the Asuras Khara and Dūshaṇa. The Asuras attacked Rāma and Lakshmaṇa, and were killed.

Ṣūrpaṇakha went to Lanka* and after relating the events that just happened to her, Khara, and Dūshaṇa, said to Rāvaṇa "O Brother! Do you see what some mere humans did to me, not even respecting the fact that I am your sister? Is not humiliating me the same as insulting you? There is a beautiful woman with the men who did this to me. You are the only one suitable to be her Lord. Her beauty is too great to describe. You should go and take that woman from the men. That is the only proper punishment for them." Thus, Ṣūrpaṇakha was the instigating force for the abduction of Sīta. Rāvaṇa summoned Mārīcha, son of Tāṭaka, and asked him to accompany and help him by drawing Rāma and Lakshmaṇa away from Sīta at the same time. Mārīcha assumed the form of a golden deer and was prancing around in front of Sīta. Sīta, fascinated by the beautiful animal, requested Rāma to capture and bring the deer to Her. Rāma pursued the deer, which suddenly ran away. After going far from the cottage, He struck the deer with an arrow. The deer, with its last breath, shouted in a human voice, "Ha! Lakshmaṇa!" Hearing the shout, Sīta asked Lakshmaṇa to go

and help Rāma. Lakshmaṇa assured Her that Rāma was not in any danger and said it was not safe to leave Her alone. This angered Sīta because she believed that what She had heard was a cry for help from Rāma. Overcome by concern for Her beloved Rāma, and irritated that Lakshmaṇa appeared utterly callous, She scolded Lakshmaṇa with hurtful words. Caught in a bind but unable to convince Sīta that Rāma was perfectly capable of protecting Himself, Lakshmaṇa reluctantly went to search for Rāma. As soon as Lakshmaṇa went some distance away, Rāvaṇa, disguised as a Yōgi (*ascetic*), approached Sīta and said "I am the king of Lanka. I have the power to make the three worlds (*heaven or Swarga, earth, and Pātāḷa or the netherworld*) tremble with fear. Leave Rāma and become my queen." So saying, he took on his own form. Sīta fainted in fear on seeing the mighty Asura. Rāvaṇa picked up the unconscious Sīta in his arms and proceeded to fly to Lanka. On the way, Jaṭāyu (*a huge, articulate bird*) confronted Rāvaṇa, demanding that he release Rāma's wife. Rāvaṇa cut his wings off with his sword, and Jaṭāyu fell to the ground. By this time, Sīta regained consciousness and realizing that Rāvaṇa was carrying Her away, bundled all Her ornaments and dropped them to the ground. Rāvaṇa took Her to Lanka and put Her in the Aṣōka Garden (*for Sīta, the name is full of irony. Ṣōka, in Sanskrit, means 'sorrow'; Aṣōka is the opposite*). Rāvaṇa kept trying to persuade Sīta to marry him, using multiple tactics; promised to make Her queen of Lanka, described his wealth and power, and criticized Rāma. When She would not listen, he tried to scare Her. He had Asura females guard Her and advise Her to change Her mind. Sīta ignored all such efforts and kept Her mind fixed on

Rāma. She refused all food and was growing thinner. After some time, the Vānara* Hanumān (*member of Sugrīva's army and the greatest devotee of Rāma*) came to Her, and after proving his bonafides by showing Rāma's signet ring, told Her he could carry Her back to Rāma. Sīta told him some specific things which would let Rāma know that he had visited and spoken with Her, but refused to let him take Her to Rāma saying "It will not enhance Rāma's fame if Hanumān took me to Rāma (*Also, the whole purpose of the Rāma Avatāra, the destruction of Rāvaṇa, would be invalidated*). Therefore, tell Rāma to come, kill Rāvaṇa and take me back." Hanumān left Lanka and went back to report to Rāma.

One of the female Asuras guarding Sīta, Trijaṭa, had a dream. In her dream, she saw that Rāma crossed the ocean, came to Lanka, killed Rāvaṇa and went away, taking Sīta in His chariot. She described the dream to Sīta. Sīta was pleased to hear this. She was eagerly expecting Rāma's arrival. Just as She hoped, Rāma was, in fact, preparing for war. Rāvaṇa, however, never stopped trying to frighten Sīta. He had a fake head fixed to the tip of an arrow and had an Asura, Vidyujjihva (*different from Rāvaṇa's brother-in-law who was accidentally killed by Rāvaṇa*), show it to Sīta and say that it was the head of Rāma. Vidyujjihva left after advising Her to accept Rāvaṇa as Her husband. Sīta was temporarily saddened thinking it might be Rāma's head but never stopped chanting Rāma's name. Then Sarama (*wife of Rāvaṇa's youngest brother Vibhīshaṇa*) came to Her and revealed that the head was fake and not Rāma's. Sita recovered Her courage.

The war started. Asuras Atikāya and Mahākāya were killed.

Rāvaṇa himself entered the battlefield. He was battling Rāma, raining arrows on Him. Rāma fainted. Rāvaṇa again tried to convince Sīta that Rāma had died and asked Trijaṭa to tell Sīta that Rāma was dead. Trijaṭa, doubtful, flew over the battlefield in the Pushpaka flying machine, saw that Rāma was unconscious but alive and so informed Sīta. Finally, Rāvaṇa was killed. Lord Brahma and other Dēvas came and praised Rāma. Rāma saw Sīta and brought her out of Lanka. However, he would not take Her back as His wife because She had been under Rāvaṇa's control for a long time. Sīta said "I have always regarded Rāma as God and if it is necessary to put my virtue to the test, I would willingly enter a fire." A fire was lit right there. Sīta entered the fire and it looked like She was surrounded by flowers. Agni (*the God of Fire*) appeared and announced that Sīta was pure and innocent. Rāma then agreed to accept Her. They rode Pushpaka and reached Ayōdhya. Rāma was coronated. With their troubles behind them, they were happy.

Sīta became pregnant. One day, Rāma approached Sīta and asked Her if She had any particular wishes. She replied that She would like to spend some time in the company of the wives of Munis. Rāma promised to fulfill Her desire the very next day.

Rāma then went to the Sabha (*court*) and asked Bhadra (*a citizen whose responsibility was to give Rāma honest information about how He and His family were perceived by the people, to confirm that He had the consent and confidence of the governed*) what the people were saying about Himself and Sīta. Bhadra confessed that some were blaming Him for accepting Sīta after She had been in Rāvaṇa's house for a long time. Rāma, of course, was

perfectly aware that Sīta was the definition of purity and that Agni himself had vouched for Her virtue. But He could not ignore the fact that not every one in the kingdom was convinced of Her virtue. Rāma immediately summoned Lakshmaṇa and directed him to take Sīta to the forest and leave Her there.

The next day, Lakshmaṇa went to Sīta. He was devastated by the knowledge that She would be abandoned in the forest. However, he could not deviate from his brother's orders. He did not tell Sīta that he was going to take Her to the forest and leave Her there. He told Her only that he was going to take Her to see the wives of Munis, per Her desire. She was totally unaware of what lay in the future for Her. Eagerly anticipating the meeting with the wives of Munis, She wore beautiful silk garments and adorned Herself with precious ornaments. Loading the chariot with gifts for the Munis' wives, She climbed aboard the chariot along with Lakshmaṇa. All along the way, there were bad omens. Sīta noticed them but did not worry that anything bad was about to happen. Lakshmaṇa, weighed down with sorrow, was incapable of conversing with Sīta and sat with head bowed down, not responding to Her attempts at conversation. Finally Sīta said "What is this, Lakshmaṇa! You were not sad when we left Ayōdhya and headed for exile in the forest. You were not sad when Indrajit struck you. You did not flinch even when Rāvaṇa attacked you with his full force. Why do you look so sad and depressed now? Tell me the truth." Lakshmaṇa could not keep the real purpose of the journey hidden any more. He touched Her feet and wept pitifully. Controlling his emotions, he blurted out "Mother! (*it was customary to regard and treat one's elder brother's wife as one's mother*) I am going to do an

unthinkable thing. Because of slanderous things said by some people, Rāma ordered me to abandon You in the forest. How can I leave You here and go?" Controlling Her own sadness, She said "Lakshmaṇa! What can you do? You are obligated to follow your brother's orders", and tried to console Lakshmaṇa. However, overcome by grief, She said "Is this fate? I believed that all our difficulties ended with the death of Rāvaṇa. I thought I will never again be separated from my Lord Rāma. Is this God's plan? If I knew before leaving, I would at least have taken one last look at my beloved and bid farewell to Him, asking Him not to forget me! Aah! Rāma!" Lakshmaṇa left the weeping Sīta in the forest, bid Her farewell and returned.

Sage Vālmīki's disciples saw Sīta in the forest and reported back to the Sage that they had seen a divine lady. Realizing by his Divya Dṛshṭi* that the lady was Sīta, Vālmīki brought Her to his Āṣram. He tended to Her like a father. Sīta gave birth in his Āṣram to twin sons, named Kuṣa and Lava. Vālmīki himself educated them and taught them to sing the Rāmāyaṇa (*they remained unaware that their mother was Sīta and Rāma Himself was their father*). When Rāma invited Sage Vālmīki to the Aṣvamēdha Yāga* He was performing, he took Kuṣa and Lava with him. He had them sing the Rāmāyaṇa. As Rāma was feeling depressed thinking of Sīta, Vālmīki informed Him that She was in his Āṣram. Ṣatrughna (*Rāma's youngest brother*) was sent to bring Sīta home. Sīta came to Ayōdhya with Ṣatrughna and stood, hands pressed together in a Namaskāra*, in front of Rāma.

Vālmīki stated that She was pure. Rāma said it would be better if She swore it Herself. Sita said "If I am unblemished and if I have

none but Rāma in my heart, let Bhūdēvi (*mother earth*) take me into Her." The earth split in that spot, and young female Nāgas* brought a throne made of diamonds and took Her in it into the earth. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣiva** I – One of the Trimūrti (*Hindu trinity*). Brahma is the creator, Vishṇu the preserver and Ṣiva is the destroyer. Ṣiva has many devotees. However, He never incarnated Himself. His domicile is Kailāsa mountain. His Consort is Pārvati. Kumāraswāmi and Vināyaka are his sons. Nandi (*an articulate bull*) is his transport and flag insignia. Ṣiva has three eyes, the third eye located on his forehead. When Ṣiva opens His third eye, anything in its view is instantly destroyed by fire.

Once, Brahma and Vishṇu were each claiming to be the greatest. Suddenly, a brilliant column resembling a phallus appeared before them. Seeing no end to it either above or below, Brahma and Vishṇu decided to check where its ends were. Brahma assumed the form of a swan and flew up. Vishṇu took the form of a boar and descended towards the bottom. However far they went, they could not see the end of it. They both returned to the starting point. However, Brahma lied and said He had seen the top end. Ṣiva then manifested Himself. Because Brahma had lied, Ṣiva gave Him a Ṣāpa* that He will be ineligible to be worshipped. Brahma and Vishṇu saluted Him with a Namaskāra*. When Brahma begged His forgiveness, Ṣiva amended His Ṣāpa providing that Brahma can receive worship at ceremonies other than Yāgas.

Once, Indra* and Bṛhaspati disguised themselves as Munis and set out to visit Lord Ṣiva in His abode. Lord Ṣiva, with a view to testing them, took a terrifying form and stood naked in their way.

Indra ordered him to step aside to let them pass. The naked man just stood there, without answering Indra. Indra repeated his order with the same result. Indra then raised the Vajrāyudha (*a thunderbolt, Indra's signature weapon, literally 'weapon of diamond'*) to strike at the man; Lord Ṣiva immobilized Indra's arm, and (*opening his third eye*) burned him down to the ground. Bṛhaspati, realizing that the naked man was Lord Ṣiva, prayed to Him and implored him to forgive Indra and save him. Lord Ṣiva, ever merciful, revived Indra. Some of the residual fire from the burning of Indra had fallen into the sea of salt and some into the Ganga and Sindhu (*modern-day Indus*) rivers. An Asura* named Jalandhara was born from the ember that fell into the sea of salt. Jalandhara once sent a message to Indra demanding that Indra surrender all his wealth to him and threatened to wage war against Indra and take his wealth. Indra refused. When Jalandhara made good on his threat and attacked, Indra brought Lord Vishṇu to the fight on his behalf. Even Vishṇu was unable to defeat Jalandhara. The Asura, now even more arrogant, sent an emissary to Ṣiva Himself, demanding that Ṣiva give up His Consort Pārvati to him. Ṣiva came and battled Jalandhara fiercely, but was unable to defeat him. Lord Vishṇu, acting on Pārvati's suggestion, seduced Jalandhara's wife, by deceit (*one of the ways to weaken an enemy is to destroy the virtue of the enemy's wife since it was believed that a wife's virtue and faithfulness [Pātivratya] protected the husband, like a shield*). This caused Jalandhara to lose his strength. Ṣiva then killed him.

Once, an Asura named Gaja (*Gaja means elephant in Sanskrit*) was indulging in activities that were displeasing to the Dēvas. The

Dēvas complained about him to Ṣiva. As Ṣiva approached Gaja to punish him, the Asura said "O Lord! I acted this way so that I could die at your hands. Please kill me and wear my hide. Grant me this boon." Ṣiva fulfilled Gaja's wish. Ṣiva acquired the name Kṛttivāsa (*Kṛtti means 'animal hide', Vāsa means 'abode'*) as a result.

After Lord Vishṇu's incarnation as Nṛsimha (*fourth incarnation*) ended (*Vishṇu was no longer in the man-lion*), the man-lion, now with high pride at his prowess, began to terrorize the worlds. Lord Ṣiva took the form of an elephant named Ṣarabha, killed the man-lion and wore its hide. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

(*The same story as in an earlier paragraph [which was from Ṣiva Purāṇa], is included in another Purāṇa with a different perspective. This is common, especially about major Deities such as Ṣiva, Vishṇu and Dēvi.*) While Brahma and Vishṇu were arguing as to which of them is the greatest, Ṣiva appeared before them and told them to stop the argument. Vishṇu complied but Brahma's fifth head abused Ṣiva. Ṣiva created a powerful and fearsome entity named Kāla Bhairava and instructed him to cut off Brahma's fifth head. Terrified at the sight of Kāla Bhairava, Brahma requested that when severed, His fifth head should fall near Ṣiva and that Ṣiva should use the skull as a begging bowl. Ṣiva granted His wish.

Ṣiva had a son named Ṣāsti by Jaganmōhini (*meaning 'enchantress of the world'; Lord Vishṇu's female form*). Kāla Bhairava *(a fierce and powerful superhuman being who destroyed Daksha's Yāga on Ṣiva's command*) was also born at the same time to Ṣiva and Jaganmōhini.

After Lord Vishṇu's incarnation as Varāha (*wild boar; third incarnation*) ended (*Vishṇu was no longer in the body of the boar*), the boar went on a rampage, terrifying the worlds, overly proud of his achievement in killing Hiraṇyāksha. Lord Brahma and the Dēvas pleaded for Ṣiva's help. Ṣiva came and removed the boar's horn. *Skānda Purāṇa*

Once, Ṣiva was performing Tapas* *(the Trimūrti are always performing Tapas directed towards each other or Dēvi*) on the crest of the Himālaya mountain. Cows and calves were roaming freely in the vicinity. One calf had just finished suckling at her mother's teat. The foam from her mouth, blown by the wind, landed on Ṣiva's head. This angered Ṣiva, who opened his third eye. The cows were all scalded to a black colour. The cows were running away, in terror. Brahma, seeing them, approached Ṣiva, greeted Him with a Namaskāra, and said "Lord! Something that touches a cow's (or calf's) lips does not become impure (*there is a concept, especially in south India, that anything touched by someone's lips is 'engili' [in Telugu] or jhūṭa [in Hindi] and it is a grave insult if it is given to or touches another, especially a superior in some aspect*), which is why we milk a cow only after the calf has suckled." Brahma also presented Ṣiva with a bull. A pacified Ṣiva then granted that the cows blackened by His third eye will resume their original appearance and accepted the bull gifted to Him by Brahma as His transport and also placed a bull as His insignia on His flag. Brahma also conferred the name 'Gōpati' (*Lord of cows and bulls; more often called 'Paṣupati', meaning Lord of animals*) on Ṣiva.

Once upon a time, evil spirits were terrorizing the people. Lord

Brahma begged Ṣiva to counteract the terror. Ṣiva said He needed an unpopulated place in order to do as He was requested. This was the reason why Ṣiva took up residence in a cremation ground, from which He has been protecting the people.

Once, at the behest of Lord Brahma, Viṣvakarma* created the Apsara* Tilōttama, with sesame seeds from all religious observances, to destroy the Asura brothers Sunda and Upasunda. She went to Lord Ṣiva and performed Pradakshiṇa (*the ritual circling, performed around the Deity after worship, to indicate devotion*). Ṣiva caused a new head to be added to His body in each major direction she moved during the Pradakshiṇa (*reason Ṣiva is sometimes portrayed with four heads*). He then directed Tilōttama to proceed and perform the divine task assigned to her.

Once upon a time, as Sage Kaṇva was performing Tapas, mud hills covered him, and a huge bamboo tree grew from the mud. Lord Brahma fashioned the bamboo into three bows and gave one of them to Ṣiva. The bow was named Pināka (*one of Ṣiva's names is Pināka Pāṇi, meaning 'He who holds the Pināka in his hand'*).

Once, Ṣukra (*the Guru of the Asuras*) stole all the wealth of Kubēra (*God of Wealth*) by fraud. Kubēra informed Ṣiva of Ṣukra's misdeed. Ṣiva went on a search for Ṣukra in order to punish him. Ṣukra hid behind some bushes for a while but Ṣiva eventually found him. Ṣiva swallowed him and shut down all the orifices in His body other than His penis. When Ṣukra begged Ṣiva to let him out, Ṣiva told him to leave through His penis. Ṣukra exited through that orifice.

Once upon a time, three Asuras named Tripura (*Sanskrit for 'three cities'*) were harassing all three worlds (*Swarga, or heaven,*

*earth, and Pātāḷa, or netherworld*). The Dēvas went to Brahma and requested Him to rid them of the Asuras. Brahma admitted He is incapable of fighting them and took the Dēvas along and went to Ṣiva. Ṣiva told them that killing these Asuras was beyond His ability but offered half His Tējas* and asked that Brahma and the others use it and their own powers to kill the Asuras. Brahma and the Dēvas offered their power to Ṣiva. Lacking the weapons and equipment needed for the task, they made the earth into a chariot, the Vēdas into horses, Sūrya and Chandra (*the Sun and Moon Gods*) into wheels and Brahma became the chariot driver. As a result of boons the Tripura had received earlier, it would be impossible to kill them unless they were all together in one place. Lord Ṣiva, with his full Tējas, invoked the three Asuras. The three of them came together. Ṣiva deployed the Pāṣupata Astra (*Astra is Sanskrit for weapon or arrow*) against them, burned the three cities down and killed the Asuras.

Once upon a time, Arjuna learnt a technique named Pratismṛti from Sage Vyāsa and on Dharmarāja's advice, performed Tapas meditating on Lord Ṣiva with a view to obtaining divine Astras. The intensity of his Tapas was causing so much heat that all the worlds were terrified. The Dēvas begged Ṣiva to give Arjuna the boons he sought and make him stop the Tapas. With a view to testing Arjuna, Ṣiva disguised Himself and His retinue as hunters, and carrying a bow and arrows, went to the forest where Arjuna was performing Tapas. At that instant, a hog lunged towards Arjuna. Instinctively, Arjuna shot an arrow at it. The fake hunter shouted loudly "Do not hit it! Do not hit it!", but Arjuna kept raining arrows at the animal. The hunter also shot an arrow at it.

The hog fell dead. The Asura who had taken the form of a hog returned to his own form and disappeared. Arjuna scolded the hunter for shooting at an animal that he was attacking. The hunter claimed it was his arrow that killed the animal. Arjuna and the hunter started fighting each other. To his dismay, none of Arjuna's arrows would touch the hunter. Arjuna deployed many of his divine weapons. Then even his signature bow, the Gāṇḍīva, disappeared. He resorted to attacking the hunter with tree branches and rocks. Finally, he engaged in hand-to-hand combat but fell down unconscious. Ṣiva then revealed His true form and praised Arjuna's valour and courage. Arjuna then sang His praises. When Ṣiva asked him to choose a boon, he requested the Pāṣupata Astra. Ṣiva granted him all the Mantras required to launch, deploy, direct, control, and recall the weapon. *Mahā Bhārata*

Once, the Dēvas and Asuras teamed up to churn the ocean of milk. One of the first objects to emerge from the effort was Hālāhala (*a deadly poison*). Terrified, they all ran to Lord Ṣiva and prayed for His help. He assured their safety, swallowed the poison and kept it in His throat. From then on, His throat became blue and he acquired the name Nīla Kanṭha (*Nīla means blue and Kanṭha is throat*). Sometime later, Amṛtam* emerged from the ocean. The Dēvas were wondering how to keep the Asuras from getting any Amṛtam. Lord Vishṇu rose to the occasion by assuming the beautiful female form of Jaganmōhini, and taking over the distribution of the Amṛtam. The Asuras were mesmerized by Her beauty and charm (*She flirted with the Asuras while serving the Amṛtam only to the Dēvas.*) and failed to receive Amṛtam (*One Asura managed to get a little Amṛtam*) Lord Ṣiva, having heard of

the episode, was curious as to what Vishṇu looked like as a female and requested Vishṇu to show Him. Vishṇu tried to dissuade Ṣiva by saying "Your mind will be disturbed and You will lose control of Your actions. You cannot withstand the effect of my female form." This only enhanced Ṣiva's desire to see for Himself and He kept pressuring Vishṇu. All of a sudden, Vishṇu disappeared. Wondering where He had gone suddenly, Ṣiva was searching for Vishṇu in all directions; He instead saw Jaganmōhini standing before Him. Ṣiva almost lost His mind. He tried to catch Her; She ran from Him. Chasing Her, Ṣiva crossed rivers, mountains, and forests, unaware of how far He and Jaganmōhini had been running. Eventually, Ṣiva ejaculated spontaneously. By then, He learned the power of Vishṇu's Māya (*power of illusion*). Vishṇu assumed His own form again.

An Asura named Vṛka, while praying to Ṣiva, proceeded to cut pieces of his flesh and throwing them in the sacrificial fire. When he was about to cut his head and put it in the fire, Ṣiva appeared and asked him to choose the boon he would like to receive. Vṛka asked that anything on which he places his hand shall disintegrate into a hundred pieces. Ṣiva granted the boon. As soon as he received the boon, Vṛka wanted to test its effect on Ṣiva Himself by touching His head. Ṣiva ran for His life and sought Vishṇu's protection. Vṛka also arrived, chasing Ṣiva. Vishṇu stopped him and told him that Ṣiva will not be visible to him until he takes a bath and cleans himself up. Trusting Vishṇu, Vṛka went to a nearby pond and while bathing, touched his own head and died. *Bhāgavata*

Ṣiva married Sati, one of the daughters of Daksha Prajāpati*

(*who had a grossly exaggerated idea of his importance, as if he was supprior even to the Trimūrti*). Daksha always felt annoyed and insulted by Ṣiva because He would not salute him with a Namaskāra or take orders from him. Due to his dislike of Ṣiva, Daksha never invited Sati to his home. Sati, however, desirous of seeing Her sisters, went to Her father's place uninvited. Daksha abused both Her and Her husband. Stung more by the insult to Her husband than to Herself, Sati created a fire by the power of Yōga and immolated Herself. Learning of this, Ṣiva gave Daksha a Ṣāpa, saying "In the Manvantara (*reign as Manu**) of Chākshusha Manu, you will be born to a woman named Mārisha. Your name then will also be Daksha. I will disrupt every religious observance you will perform." Daksha responded "Because you gave me a Ṣāpa without any provocation from me, I am also giving you a Ṣāpa. You shall be ineligible to receive Havya* from any Yāga." Angered by the counter-Sāpa, Ṣiva went to a Yāga being performed by Daksha, created Gaṇas (*faithful followers of Ṣiva, invoked when He intends to attack someone*) and Vīrabhadra, and had them destroy the Yāga and the premises where it was being performed. Among those who attended the Yāga were the Dēvas, including Chandra (*the Moon God, married to twenty seven of Daksha's daughters*). As Vīrabhadra and the Gaṇas were going about creating mayhem, Chandra fell and was stepped on by Ṣiva. Chandra prayed to Ṣiva, who took pity on him and placed him gently on His own forehead. Sati was later re-born as Pārvati. Ṣiva married Her. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

Chandra had been given a Ṣāpa by Daksha that he would suffer from consumption. A frightened Chandra approached Ṣiva and

sought Ṣaraṇu*. Ṣiva assured his safety and placed him on His forehead. Daksha, upset that Ṣiva was countermanding a Ṣāpa given by him, went to Ṣiva and demanded that He give up Chandra. Ṣiva refused, citing the fact that He had given Ṣaraṇu to Chandra. Daksha threatened to give a Ṣāpa to Ṣiva. Vishṇu, seeking to prevent the serious repercussions of Daksha's rashness, intervened and negotiated a compromise: He divided Chandra into two parts, one not affected by the consumptive disease to remain on Ṣiva's forehead, and the other, which would periodically wax and wane, given to Chandra's wives, the Tāras (*twenty seven Stars*). Ṣiva has been wearing the Moon on His forehead since then (*one of His most popular names is Chandraṣēkhara*).

Ṣiva never had any children by His Consort, Pārvati. The Dēvas, uncertain and fearful as to what a son of Ṣiva and Pārvati (*He is the most powerful and fearsome of the Trimūrti; Pārvati, a manifestation or at least an aspect of Dēvi, the Supreme Being Herself*) would be like, constantly tried to prevent them from having sex. One time, while they were engaged in foreplay, Agni stood in front of them. Pārvati moved away on seeing the intruder. As Ṣiva ejaculated, Pārvati commanded Agni to receive the semen. Later, Ganga received it and placed it in some grass. Kumāraswāmi was born from that semen.

Vighnēṣvara (*Vināyaka, Gaṇēṣa among other names*) was created from the cleaning paste Pārvati removed from Her body while bathing. One day, Ṣiva hit Sūrya (*the Sun God*) with His trident. Sūrya died as a result and fell to the ground. Sūrya's father, Kaṣyapa, revived his son and then gave Ṣiva a Ṣāpa saying "When you behold your son, his head will be shattered the same way as

you caused my son's head to be broken." Some time later, Pārvati invited Ṣiva to meet Vighnēṣvara. Ṣiva went and saw him. Instantly, Vighnēṣvara's head shattered. As Pārvati cried inconsolably, the Dēvas brought the head of an elephant from a holy place named Pushpa Bhadra and attached it to Vighnēṣvara's body. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

One day, the Asura Rāvaṇa went to Kailāsa (*Ṣiva's abode in the Himālaya mountains*) wishing for an audience with Ṣiva and stood at the entrance. Nandi (*the articulate bull that is both Ṣiva's vehicle and His security chief*) blocked the door and told him that it was not a good time to visit Ṣiva. When Rāvaṇa abused Nandi, Nandi shot back with a Ṣāpa. Enraged, Rāvaṇa, shouting "What is great about you or Ṣiva?" picked up Kailāsa as if it was a ball and started spinning it in his hand. Pārvati, taking a leisurely stroll in the garden, ran in fear to Ṣiva and hugged Him. Ṣiva embraced Pārvati lovingly to calm Her, and deciding to humiliate Rāvaṇa a little before granting him an audience, pushed Kailāsa down with one thumb. Rāvaṇa's palms were stuck under the weight of Kailāsa and crushed. When Rāvaṇa prayed to Ṣiva, He then granted him an audience.

When Ṣiva went to destroy Daksha's Yāga, He took His bow with Him. Seeing the Dēvas receiving Havya from the Yāga which was denied to Him, He struck them with His bow. The frightened Dēvas saluted Him with a Namaskāra and requested His Ṣaraṇu. He then stopped striking them and gave the bow to them. The Dēvas gifted it to King Dēvarāta, sixth generation descendant of Nimi. All descendants of that royal family worshipped the bow. At the time of Sīta's Swayamvara*, the bow was in King Janaka's palace. The

criterion for winning the hand of Sīta was to raise and string Ṣiva's bow. It broke while Rāma was stringing it. *Rāmāyaṇa*

Once upon a time, an argument arose among the great Sages as to who, among Brahma, Vishṇu, and Ṣiva can grant Mukti*. They sent Sage Bhṛgu to investigate and determine the answer. When he went to Lord Ṣiva's abode, Ṣiva and His Consort Pārvati were engaged in lovemaking. Ṣiva chided him, asking "Why did you enter our private quarters without seeking permission first?" Bhṛgu gave Ṣiva a Ṣāpa saying "Your primary nature is Tamōguṇa (*Sanskrit for 'darkness' or 'ignorance'*), so you will be ineligible for worship in your real form." (*Vēnkaṭāchala Māhātmyam is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Vēnkaṭāchala Māhātmyam*

**Ṣiva II** – Wife of Vasu named Anala and mother of Manōjava and Avigjnānamati. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣivadūti** – Dēvi (*the Supreme Being*) who was also known as Kauṣika. The Dēvas sought Lord Ṣiva's help when the Asuras* Ṣumbha and Niṣumbha were harassing them. Ṣiva sent Kauṣika to the Asuras with a message that they should move to the Pātāḷa (*netherworld*) and that if they did not comply, they will be killed. She thereby acquired the name Ṣivadūti (*Dūti means 'female messenger' in Sanskrit*). *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Ṣlishṭi** – Son of Dhruva and husband of Succhāya. Their sons were Ripu, Ripunjaya, Ripuvṛkala, and Vṛkatējas. *Hari Vamṣa*

**Sōma** – Son of Manasvini and her husband Prajāpati. His wife was Manōhara. They had sons Varchas, Ṣiṣira, Prāṇa, and Ramaṇa, and a daughter Pṛtha. He was one of the Ashṭa (*eight*) Vasus. *Mahā Bhārata; Matsya Purāṇa*

**Sōmada** – Daughter of a Gandharva* woman named Ūrmiḷa. She was helping a Muni named Chūli with his chores. She and the Muni had a son named Brahmadatta. The Dēvas requested her to send her son to help them with some divine activity. She refused, saying she cannot bear to be separated from her son. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sōmadatta I** – Son of Bāhlika (*brother of King Ṣantanu, father of Bhīshma*). Father of Bhūriṣrava. Ṣini, the son of the Yadava King Yudhājit attended the Swayamvara* of Dēvaki and as he was bringing Dēvaki to be married to Vasudēva, Sōmadatta attacked him. Ṣini defeated and humiliated Sōmadatta. Nursing a grudge against Ṣini for this humiliation, Sōmadatta, unable to face the people, went to the forest and performed Tapas* with the objective of acquiring the ability to defeat Ṣini. Before his Tapas bore fruit, both Ṣini and his son had died. Therefore, he obtained a boon that he would have a son who can defeat Ṣini's grandson. Bhūriṣrava was born as his son. Sōmadatta fought on the Kaurava side in the Mahā Bhārata war. He was killed by Sātyaki (*constant companion and close friend of Lord Kṛshṇa*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sōmadatta II** – Son of Kṛṣāṣva. His son was Kakutstha. He and his wife Sumati performed an Aṣvamēdha Yāga* and attained Puṇya* Loka. *Bhāgavata*

**Sōmaka** – A royal Sage. He had one hundred wives but only one son. One day, an ant bit his son and as the child cried, all of Sōmaka's wives also cried with him. Saddened by the incident, and feeling that depending on just the one son makes continuation of the lineage uncertain, he asked his council of ministers for suggestions on how he could beget more sons. His Ṛtvija*

suggested that if he performs a Yāga using his son as the sacrificial animal, the Dēvas will be pleased and grant him more sons. He did as directed and all his wives became pregnant and gave birth to sons. But Sōmaka died and went to Naraka (*hell*). He saw the Ṛtvija there. When he asked the Ṛtvija why he was in hell, he said it was due to officiating at a Yāga using a human as the sacrificial animal. He also said Sōmaka is about to go to Swarga Lōka (*heaven*) and requested the king to take him along. Sōmaka, receiving Yama's (*God of Death*) consent, took the Ṛtvija with him to Swarga. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sōmaṣarma** – Son of Ṣāliṣūka of the dynasty of Aṣōka. His son was Ṣatadhanva. *Bhāgavata*

**Sōmaṣravasu** – Son of Ṣrutaṣravasu. He was the court priest of King Janamējaya (*great-grandson of Arjuna*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sōmavanta** – Son of a Brahmin named Sārasvata. He and Sumēdha, son of a Brahmin named Varamitra, had their Upanayanam* performed by their fathers and completed their education in the Vēdas. When they reached the age of sixteen, their fathers told them that they (*the fathers*) did not have the money to perform their sons' marriages. It was suggested that they visit the king of the country to earn an income. When they went to see the king, he told them "A princess named Sīmantini is giving gifts of money and gold to married couples. Disguise youselves as a husband and wife and get gifts from her." Hoping to quickly earn enough money to start their careers, they followed the king's suggestion, with Sōmavanta disguised as a woman. Sīmantini gave them gifts assuming them to be husband and wife. As soon as they

were seen by Sīmantini, however, Sōmavanta truly became a woman. When they went home, they and their parents were upset. They all went to the king who suggested the deception, and complained to him that one of the young men became a woman by acting on his suggestion. The king prayed to Lord Ṣiva hoping to get the sex change reversed but was told that since Sīmantini, a Pativrata* saw Sōmavanta as a woman, he will remain as Sōmavati. Sārasvata gave Sōmavati in marriage to Sumēdha. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Ṣōṇapura** – The city of Bāṇāsura (see **Usha**). *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣraddha I** – Wife of Vaivasvata Manu*. They had sons named Ikshvāku, Nṛga, Ṣaryāti, Dishṭa, Dhṛshṭa, Karūṣaka, Narishyanta, Pṛshaddhru, Nabhaga and Kavi. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣraddha II** – Daughter of Kardama Prajāpati*. She had daughters named Sinīvāli, Guhu, Rāka, and Anumati. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣrāddha Dēva** – Son of Sūrya (*the Sun God*) and his wife Sangjna. He became Vaivasvata Manu*. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣrāvasta** – Son of Yavanāṣva. He built the city of Ṣrāvasti. His son was Bṛhadaṣva. *Bhāgavata*

**Sṛgālavāsudēva** – A resident of the city of Karavīra. He was a friend of Jarāsandha. He fought against Lord Kṛshṇa in support of Jarāsandha. Kṛshṇa killed him. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣrī** – A spider. In a previous life, it was Ūrṇanābha. This spider lived in the Gaja forest, in a stand of Bilva trees (*wood-apple. The leaf of the Bilva tree is especially dear to Ṣiva and is used for worshipping Him*). When a great devotee of Ṣiva named Tinna was

plucking Bilva leaves to use in Ṣiva worship, the spider was on one of the leaves. (*This and the following story are both parts of a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**). *Ṣrī Kāḷahasti Māhātmyam*

**Ṣrī Kāḷahasti** – The former name of this holy site was the Gaja forest. Sage Vasishṭha's Asram was located here. When the sons of Vasishṭha were killed by Viṣvāmitra, the grief-stricken Vasishṭha, trying to commit suicide, jumped from the top of a hill. But Bhūdēvi (*earth, in female form*) saved his life. Following her advice, he prayed to Lord Ṣiva. Ṣiva appeared to him in his Linga* form and asked him to choose a boon. Vasishṭha asked Him to teach him Brahma* Vidya (*Brahma here is used to denote the Supreme Being, not one of the Trinity*) and to remain in that place as a Linga, receiving Pūjas from devotees and granting them Mukti*. The Linga is known as Amṛta Linga. Seeing Ṣiva going to this place, His Consort Pārvati accompanied Him. Vasishṭha worshipped Her as Gjnāna Prasūnāmba.

The spider Ṣrī, placed on the Linga by Tinna with Bilva leaves, was spinning a web to cover the Linga. The spider retained knowledge of its previous life. Ṣiva caused the web to be burned up by a lamp, to test the spider's devotion to Him. Angry at the lamp, the spider tried to swallow it.

An elephant used to come to worship the Linga with leaves and water and while doing so, damaging the spider's web. The spider, wanting to catch whoever was damaging the web, kept watch and when the elephant came to worship, the spider entered the elephant's trunk. A serpent, which was also worshipping the Linga, also entered the elephant's trunk.

The serpent was protecting the Linga from the Sun with its hood

and doing Pūja with diamonds. Seeing the elephant spoiling its worship, the serpent entered the elephant's trunk. The serpent was one of those Ṣiva wore around His neck as ornaments, named Kāḷa, on earth due to a Ṣāpa*.

Plagued by the creatures intruding in its trunk, the elephant (*formerly one of Ṣiva's soldiers, or Pramathas, named Hasti, also on earth due to a Ṣāpa*), died by banging its head against the Linga. Pleased by the devotion of all three (*Ṣrī, the spider; Kāḷa, the serpent; and Hasti, the elephant*) Ṣiva granted them Mukti*. The name Ṣrī Kāḷahasti was given to the place as a result. (*Ṣrī Kāḷahasti Māhātmyam is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'*.) *Ṣrī Kāḷahasti Māhātmyam*

**Ṣrīkunḍala** – Son of Hēmakunḍala. He and his brother Vikunḍala patronized prostitutes and generally led immoral lives. Both of them died of serpent bites. Yama (*the God of Death who rules hell*) told his soldiers to take Ṣrīkunḍala to Naraka (*hell*), and his brother to Swarga (*heaven*). The soldiers asked "They both sinned equally and both died the same way. Why the difference in treatment?" He said that Vikunḍala earned Puṇya* by bathing in the (*lunar*) month of Māgha (*which occurs in the winter*), whereas Ṣrīkunḍala did not. Therefore, with his sins not neutralized by any Puṇya, he has to go to Naraka. *Padma Purāṇa*

**Ṣrīmati I** – Daughter of Ambarīsha, a king of the Ikshvāku dynasty. Both Sage Nārada and Parvata (*his nephew*) fell in love with her and each requested her father to give her in marriage to him. Ambarīsha agreed to give her to one of them. Nārada, Parvata, as well as many princes attended her Swayamvara*. Lord Vishṇu also came to her Swayamvara. However, He was invisible

to everyone except to Ṣrīmati. She chose the divinely handsome Vishṇu who took her to Vaikunṭha. *Linga Purāṇa*

**Ṣrīmati II** – Wife of Sage Kapila. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣrī Ṣaila** – A mountain. Ṣilāda's son, Parvata, prayed to Lord Ṣiva. When Ṣiva appeared to him, he asked for a boon that he should become a mountain (*Parvata is Sanskrit for 'mountain'*) and that Ṣiva should reside on the mountain in His Linga* form. Ṣiva granted him the boon. Vasumati, daughter of a Muni, after obtaining a boon from Lord Brahma that her name should be Ṣrī, came to the mountain to perform Tapas* directed towards Ṣiva. The mountain came to be known as Ṣrīṣaila (*Ṣaila is another word in Sanskrit for 'mountain'*) as a result. (*Ṣrīṣaila Māhātmyam is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Ṣrīṣaila Māhātmyam*

**Ṣṛngabēripura** – The city where Guha, friend of Rāma, lived. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣṛngi** – Son of Muni named Ṣamīka. While his father was in a state of Samādhi (*Yōga-induced stasis*. *In this state, all sensory inputs are blocked, with the holy man's consciousness concentrated only on the object of his Tapas**), King Parīkshit (*grandson of Arjuna*) placed a dead serpent around the Sage's neck. Ṣṛngi, learning of this and considering that if the serpent had been alive at the time, it would have killed his father, gave the king a Ṣāpa* that he will die by a snakebite within seven days. When Ṣamīka learned what had happened, he told his son he should not have given the king a Ṣāpa. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣṛnjaya I –** A king. Once, Sage Nārada and his nephew Parvata visited him. He had his daughter Madayanti look after them during

their visit. When Nārada expressed his love for her, the king gave her in marriage to him.

Sṛnjaya wished that a son should be born whose Nishṭhīvana (*excretions including urine, feces, tears, saliva, and sweat*) should be made of gold and Nārada granted the wish. Parvata (*Nārada's nephew*) who was also present at the time, predicted that the boy will not live long. Because his Nishṭhīvana were all gold, he was given the name Suvarṇashṭhīvi. Some thieves, learning of this unusual attribute of the boy, killed him and examined the body, expecting that his body must be made of gold inside. As a consequence of their sins, they all died, killing each other. Sṛnjaya 'thought of'* Nārada. Nārada went to Yama Lōka (*the world of Yama, the God of Death*) and brought the boy back alive to Sṛnjaya.

On another occasion, Indra*, concerned that this boy might become more powerful than himself, said to his Vajrāyudha (*a thunderbolt, Indra's signature weapon, literally 'weapon of diamond'*) "Assume the form of a tiger and kill Suvarṇashṭhīvi." While Sṛnjaya was strolling on the banks of river Ganga with his wife and children, the tiger killed Suvarṇashṭhīvi. Sṛnjaya again 'thought of' Nārada, who again brought him back to life. Suvarṇashṭhīvi ruled his kingdom for a long time. *Bhāgavata*

**Sṛnjaya II** – A descendant of Yayāti. Son of Kālanātha and father of Puranjaya. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣruta** – Son of Bhagīratha (*ancestor of Rāma*) and father of Nābhāvara. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣrutadēva I** – Sister of Vasudēva. She married Vṛddhaṣarma, of

the Karūsha dynasty. Their son was Dantavaktra (*he and Ṣiṣupāla were the third and last evil incarnations of Lord Vishṇu's guards Jaya and Vijaya, due to a Ṣāpa**). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣrutadēva II** – A Brahmin. He lived in the city of Mithila. He was faithful to Dharma (*the righteous path*), and of pure character. Lord Kṛshṇa, accompanied by many Munis visited his home and enjoyed his hospitality for a few days. They also stayed at the home of King Bahuḷāṣva of Mithila. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣrutakarma I** – Son of Sūrya (*the Sun God*) and Chhāya. He became the Graha Ṣani (*Graha is Sanskrit for 'planet'. Ṣani is Saturn*). *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Ṣrutakarma II** – One of the Upapānḍavas (*sons of the Pānḍavas*), son of Sahadēva and Draupadi. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣrutakīrti I** – Wife of Ṣatrughna (*Rāma's youngest brother*). *Brahma Purāṇa*

**Ṣrutakīrti II** – Sister of Vasudēva and wife of Dhṛtakētu, king of Kēkaya. Their sons included Pratardhana. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣrutakīrti III** – One of the Upapānḍavas (*sons of the Pānḍavas*), son of Arjuna and Draupadi. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣrutakīrti IV** – Father of Prajāpāla. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Ṣrutaparva** – A king. Once, Sage Agastya came to him and requested that the king give him any wealth in excess of what he and his dependents need. Since he did not have any wealth, he joined Agastya and went to King Pradhnaṣva seeking wealth. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣrutasēna I** – Son of Ṣatrughna (*youngest brother of Lord Rāma*). *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣrutasēna II** – Wife of King Ṣāradānḍāyani. Younger sister of Kunti (*elder of King Pānḍu's two wives*). At her husband's direction, she had two Kshētraja* sons Tardama and Durjaya. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣrutasēna III** – One of the Upapānḍavas (*sons of the Pānḍavas*), son of Bhīma and Draupadi. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣrutasēna IV** – Son of Nitanta. He and his brothers including Bindusāra all married the same woman, Ajita. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣrutasēna V** – Younger brother of Janamējaya (*sons of Parīkshit, great-grandsons of Arjuna*). When a (*articulate*) dog came near the place where Janamējaya was performing a Sattra Yāga, he beat her. The dog complained to Janamējaya that his brother beat her. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣrutaṣrava** – Son of Sūrya (*the Sun God*) and Chhāya. He will become the eighth Manu* (*current one is the seventh*), Sāvarṇi. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Ṣrutaṣravasa** – Younger sister of Vasudēva. She married Damaghōsha. Their son was Ṣiṣupāla. After hearing a proclamation by Ākāṣavāṇi*, she asked every visitor to pick up her son. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣrutaṣravasu I** – A great Muni. King Janamējaya (*great-grandson of Arjuna*), worried about the words of a dog, and searching for the proper priest to perform rituals of absolution, came to him and asked him to send his son. He did as requested. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣrutaṣravasu II** – Father of Sōmaṣravasu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣrutavarma** – Son of Dhṛtarāshṭra (*not one of Gāndhāri's hundred sons*). Bhīma killed him in the Mahā Bhārata war. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣrutāyu** – King of Kaḷinga. His son was Niyutāyu. Ṣrutāyu fought on the Kaurava side in the Mahā Bhārata war. When he saw his son being killed by Bhīma, he attacked Bhīma and fought fiercely, but was defeated. Arjuna killed him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣrutāyudha** – A king. Son of Varuṇa (*the God of Rain*). Varuṇa gave him a mace. Anyone wielding the mace will be immune to defeat. However, if used against a noncombatant, it will boomerang and kill the person who wielded it. Varuṇa did inform him of these properties of the mace, but Ṣrutāyudha, fighting in the Mahā Bhārata war on the Kaurava side, forgot the warning about using on noncombatants. During the battle, Arjuna knocked out the horses drawing his chariot. Ṣrutāyudha then descended to the ground and threw the mace at Kṛshṇa. It became a garland of flowers around Kṛshṇa's neck but also boomeranged and killed Ṣrutāyudha. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sthavishṭa** – Wife of King Ṣaryāti. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Sthūlakarṇa** – A Yaksha (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers including sex change and shape-shifting*). When Ṣikhanḍi (see **Amba**) came to the forest where Sthūlakarṇa lived and was about to immolate herself, he took pity on her and asked the reason for her attempting suicide. Ṣikhanḍi told him about how she is a woman but her parents advertised that she was a man and performed her marriage with another woman, and wept.

Sthūlakarṇa, to help Ṣikhanḍi, gave his maleness to Ṣikhanḍi and took her femaleness and became a woman. The now male Ṣikhanḍi promised to return in ten days (*long enough to save the family's reputation*) and give up maleness to Sthūlakarṇa. Meanwhile, Kubēra (*God of Wealth and Lord of Yakshas*) came to the forest. Bashful due to being female, Sthūlakarṇa did not come out to greet Kubēra. On learning the reason, Kubēra gave Sthūlakarṇa a Ṣāpa* that he would remain female for the rest of Ṣikhanḍi's life. Ṣikhanḍi came as he promised to give up his maleness. But Sthūlakarṇa sent him away, saying what happened was not Ṣikhanḍi's fault (*The entire plan to force Bhīshma to unilaterally disarm and leave the battlefield depended on Ṣikhanḍi remaining male for the Mahā Bhārata war*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sthūlakētu** – A Muni. Pramadvara (*daughter of a Gandharva* named Viṣvāvasu and the Apsara* Mēnaka*), was raised in his Āṣram. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sthūlaṣira** – Son of King Aṣvaṣira. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Subāha I** – Son of Ṣatrughna (*youngest brother of Lord Rāma*). *Bhāgavata*

**Subāha II** – A descendent of Aniruddha (*grandson of Lord Kṛshṇa*). *Bhāgavata*

**Subāhu I** – Son of Damayanti's maternal aunt and her husband Vīrabāhu. King of the city of Chēdi. While Damayanti was incognito, she was in his palace, serving his mother as a Sairandhri (*maidservant*). Once they found out her real identity, he treated her with all due respect and arranged for a flying machine to take her

to her father's place in Vidarbha. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Subāhu II** – Son of King Kuvalayāṣva. Older brother of Alarka. When Alarka succeeded to the throne, he neglected his duties as king, and spent all his time indulging in romantic pursuits. Subāhu, with the assistance of the king of Kāṣi*, went to war against his brother. Looking at a ring his mother had given him, Alarka realized that the body is fragile and temporary, and the path of lasting happiness was different from the path he had been pursuing. He went to the great Guru Dattātrēya, and receiving much Gjnāna (*knowledge*) from him, gave his kingdom to his older brother Subāhu and retired to the forest to perform Tapas*. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Subāhu III** – King of Kāṣi* and father of Ṣaṣikaḷa. A prince named Sudarṣana (*whose father had lost his kingdom*) was in love with her. Subāhu announced a Swayamvara* for his daughter. Sudarṣana attended the Swayamvara. Yudhājit, the grandfather of Ṣatrujit, Subāhu's half-brother who was enthroned as their father's successor, came there with intent to kill Sudarṣana. In order to forestall such an event, Yudhājit was asked to leave. Subāhu tried to persuade his daughter to choose someone other than Sudarṣana, but she refused to consider anyone else. It appeared that a war might break out that day. Subāhu announced a postponement of the Swayamvara till the next day. He then performed his daughter's marriage with Sudarṣana that very night. When they learned of this development, the kings attending the Swayamvara made plans to attack Subāhu. Subāhu humbly apologised to them, but some of the kings were not willing to forgive the transgression. Some of them, led by Yudhājit, declared war. Sudarṣana, fighting alone,

killed them. Dēvi (*the Supreme Being*) then appeared to Sudarṣana, and gave him boons. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Subala** – King of Gāndhāra country and father of Gāndhāri *(mother of the Kauravas*). He had several other daughters including Satyavrata, Satyasēna, Sudhēshṇa and Daṣārṇa. He gave all his daughters to Dhṛtarāshṭra in marriage. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣubha** – Sister of Gāndhāri. Dhṛtarāshṭra married her as well. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Subhadra** – Daughter of Rōhiṇi (*Balarāma's mother*) and her husband Vasudēva (*father of Lord Kṛshṇa*). She fell in love with Arjuna, sight unseen, having heard of his virtues and accomplishments. However, her older brother Balarāma was not in favour of relationships with the Pāṇḍavas. Lord Kṛshṇa, however, knew of her desire, and intending to give Subhadra in marriage to Arjuna, invited him to Dwāraka disguised as a Yati (*Sanskrit for 'ascetic'*). Balarāma (*who had great respect for Yatis*), unaware that the Yati was Arjuna, put Subhadra in charge of attending to the Yati's needs. While performing chores for the Yati, Subhadra asked him about Arjuna. The Yati revealed to her that he was Arjuna. Subhadra went away blushing. Kṛshṇa then arranged some festivities on nearby islands. Balarāma went there with a retinue. Kṛshṇa performed Subhadra's marriage with Arjuna at that time, with many Brahmins in attendance (*each of the Pāṇḍavas had at least one other wife for himself alone, in addition to Draupadi, whom they all shared*). Returning to Indraprastha with his new wife Subhadra, Arjuna was concerned about how Draupadi would react to her. He instructed Subhadra to pay obeisance to Draupadi.

Subhadra treated Draupadi with respect and honour. A son, Abhimanyu was born to Subhadra. She did not accompany Arjuna, his brothers and Draupadi when they went to exile in the forest. At the end of the incognito year, she and her son joined her husband in the city of Virāṭa in time for the marriage of Abhimanyu with Princess Uttara. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣubhāngi I** – Wife of Kuru and mother of Vidūratha. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣubhāngi II** – Daughter of King Chitrāngada of Kaḷinga. Duryōdhana, Karṇa and many other kings were present at her Swayamvara*. With garland in her hands, as she walked right past Duryōdhana without choosing him, he was enraged. Duryōdhana put her in his chariot and abducted her. As he drove away, several of the kings at the Swayamvara chased him. Karṇa interceded and defeated them all. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣubhāngi III** – Daughter of Rukmi (*brother of Rukmiṇi, Consort of Lord Kṛshṇa*). She chose her first cousin Pradyumna (*son of Kṛshṇa and Rukmiṇi*) as her husband at her Swayamvara*. Her father played games of chance with Balarāma (*older brother of Kṛshṇa*) who attended the wedding and later, was killed by him. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣubhra** – Son of Havirdhāna. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Suchāru** – Son of Lord Kṛshṇa and Rukmiṇi. *Bhāgavata*

**Suchandra I** – Son of Krūra, a daughter of Daksha Prajāpati*and wife of Kaṣyapa. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Suchandra II** – Husband of Kaḷāvati. After enjoying conjugal

relations with Kaḷāvati for a long time, he was fed up with family life and leaving her, went to the Āṣram of Sage Agastya to perform Tapas*. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Suchandra III** –King of Viṣāla (*a country*). Son of Hēmachandra and grandson of Dhūmrāṣva. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Succhhāya** – Daughter of Agni (*the God of Fire*) and wife of Ṣishṭi. They had sons named Kṛpa (*different from the Guru of the Kauravas*), Ripunjaya, Vṛtta, Vṛka, Vṛkatējasa, and Chakshu. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Ṣuchi** – A merchant. After King Nala left his wife Damayanti in the forest, Damayanti, looking for her husband, saw Ṣuchi and inquired of him about Nala. She reached the city of King Subāhu (*Damayanti's cousin*) with the merchant's help. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sudakshiṇa I** – Wife of King Dilīpa (*ancestor of Lord Rāma*). Hoping to beget offspring, she and her husband worshipped Nandini (*sacred cow in the Āṣram of Sage Vasishṭha*). Their son was Raghu. *Raghu Vamṣa*

**Sudakshiṇa II** – Son of the king of Kāṣi*. His father fought against Lord Kṛshṇa on behalf of Paunḍraka Vāsudēva. Kṛshṇa killed him. Wanting to avenge his father's death by killing Kṛshṇa, Sudakshiṇa prayed to Lord Ṣiva. When Ṣiva appeared to him, he stated the purpose of his prayer. Ṣiva advised him to perform a Hōma* named Abhichāra (*Sanskrit for 'destructive charms or spells'*), and that that would make Agni help him fulfill his desire. Sudakshiṇa followed Ṣiva's advice. A female Asura* of terrifying appearance, named Kṛtya emerged from the fire and attacked the city of Dwāraka (*Kṛshṇa's city in the middle of the ocean)* burning

every thing in her way. The people sought the protection of Kṛshṇa. Kṛshṇa deployed His Chakra* against Kṛtya. Unable to withstand the fury of the Chakra, Kṛtya returned to Kāṣi and burned Sudakshiṇa and the Ṛtvija* who officiated at the Hōma to death. The Chakra burned down Kāṣi and returned to Kṛshṇa. *Bhāgavata*

**Sudakshiṇa III** – King of Kambhōja. He was a foreigner (*Yavana, meaning Greek; in later times, used for any foreigner*). He came to the aid of Duryōdhana in the Mahā Bhārata war. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sudāma I** – Lord Kṛshṇa's constant companion. Once, seeing Kṛshṇa cavorting with shepherdesses, Rādha (*His beloved, passionately in love with Him; however they were never married*) rebuked him in harsh terms. When Sudāma protested against her abuse of Kṛshṇa, she gave him a Ṣāpa* that he would be born as an Asura*. Sudāma took birth as the Asura Ṣankhachūḍa as a result. (*Alternate version is that a shepherdess named Viraja, also passionately in love with Kṛshṇa, was the one who rebuked Kṛshṇa and gave the Ṣāpa to Sudāma*) *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Sudāma II** – A garland-maker in the city of Mathura. He was supplying garlands of flowers to Kamsa (*Lord Kṛshṇa's evil uncle*). When Kṛshṇa and Balarāma went to Mathura to visit Kamsa, they first went to his house. Sudāma worshipped them and gave them garlands of flowers. Kṛshṇa, pleased by his devotion, asked him to choose a boon. He wished that he should remain a devotee of Kṛshṇa, and be kind to all creatures. Kṛshṇa gave him his wishes and in addition, wealth, strength, a long life and fame. *Bhāgavata*

**Sudāma III** – Son of Sarvakāma (*also known as Sudāsa*). Mitrasahu was another of his names. *Bhāgavata; Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*

**Sudarṣana I** – The Chakra*, Lord Vishṇu's weapon. It shines with the brightness of a thousand suns. When deployed, it kills the target and returns to Vishṇu. It chased Sage Durvāsa when he tried to harm King Ambarīsha, who was a great devotee of Vishṇu. It was used to kill the crocodile which was fighting Gajēndra (*an articulate elephant*), another devotee of Vishṇu. Agni (*the God of Fire*) brought the Sudarṣana to Lord Kṛshṇa to prevent his enemies from obstructing him while Agni was burning (*eating*) the Khāṇḍava forest. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sudarṣana II** – The name of a Jambū (*rose apple*) tree south of the Mēru mountain. The island where the tree was located was called Sudarṣanadwīpa (*Dwīpa is Sanskrit for 'island'*). Jambūdwīpa (*the ancient name for the Indian subcontinent*) is another name for it. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sudarṣana III** – Daughter of King Duryōdhana (*not the Kaurava*) of the dynasty of Manu. Her father used to have her perform chores in the building where the Agni (*sacred fire*) for the performance of religious rites was located. Agni, infatuated by her beauty, took the form of a Brahmin and asked her to marry him. She told him that it is upto her parents to decide whom she should marry, and that she is not free to decide herself. Agni went to Duryōdhana and asked for his daughter's hand in marriage. Duryōdhana was very happy to have Agni for his son-in-law. He performed his daughter's marriage with Agni. They had a son

named Sudarṣana. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sudarṣana IV** – A Vidyādhara (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers*). He was extremely good looking. Once, while flying over a forest named Ambika, he saw Munis who were sons of Sage Angirasa and laughed. They gave him a Ṣāpa* saying "You laughed at us due to your vanity about your good looks. You will therefore, become a serpent." When he begged them for the means of release from the Ṣāpa, they told him "Lord Vishṇu will take an incarnation as a Yādava (*cowherd dynasty into which Kṛshṇa was born*). He will come to this forest. You will be released from the Ṣāpa when He kicks you with His feet." He immediately turned into a serpent.

One day, Lord Kṛshṇa came to the Ambika forest on a trip with family and friends. This serpent wound itself (*like a boa constrictor*) around Nanda (*who raised Kṛshṇa in Gōkul*) and would not let go. After a while, Kṛshṇa came and kicked the serpent with His feet. Sudarṣana was thereby released from his Ṣāpa, regained his original form, saluted Kṛshṇa with a Namaskāra* and went on his way. *Bhāgavata*

**Sudarṣana V** – Son of King Durjaya and his wife Mitrakēṣi. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Sudarṣana VI** – Son of Dhruvasandhi and father of Agnivarṇa. *Bhāgavata*

Dhruvasandhi was killed by a lion while he was on a hunt. Sudarṣana was just six years old at the time of his father's death. He was coronated immediately. He mastered the art of politics while still very young. *Raghu Vamṣa*

Sudarṣana's mother was Manōrama. It was intended that he would be coronated on his father's untimely demise. But Yudhājit, the father of his stepmother, intervened and claimed that his grandson, Ṣatrujit should succeed his father, as he was older than Sudarṣana. Sudarṣana's maternal grandfather, Vīrasēna then entered the dispute, claiming that Sudarṣana's mother was Dhruvasandhi's first wife and therefore, Sudarṣana was first in the order of succession. A war ensued between Vīrasēna and Yudhājit, in which Vīrasēna was killed. Manōrama, to protect her son from what had become a hostile environment, secretly took him to the Āṣram of Sage Bharadvāja for safety. Sudarṣana worshipped Dēvi (*the Supreme Being, referred to as Ādi Ṣakti and a thousand other names*) while getting an education. Yudhājit, intending to find Sudarṣana and kill him, went on a manhunt with the help of a tribal soothsayer named Durdamna and went to Bharadvāja's Āṣram. He requested the Muni to hand Sudarṣana over to him but the Muni refused to do so. Yudhājit was devising means of convincing Sudarṣana with friendly gestures that he poses no danger to the boy, lure him out of the Āṣram, and kill him. In the meantime, Ṣaṣikala, daughter of Subāhu, the king of Kāṣi*, having heard of the good looks and qualities of Sudarṣana, vowed to marry no one but him. Subāhu announced a Swayamvara* for his daughter. Sudarṣana attended the Swayamvara. Many of those in attendance expected that Yudhājit would kill Sudarṣana there. In order to prevent such an event, they asked Yudhājit to leave. Subāhu tried to persuade his daughter to choose someone other than Sudarṣana, but she refused to consider anyone else. It appeared that a war might break out that day. Subāhu announced a

postponement of the Swayamvara till the next day. He then performed his daughter's marriage with Sudarṣana that very night. When they learned of this development, the kings attending the Swayamvara made plans to go to war against Subāhu. Subāhu humbly apologised to them but some were not willing to forgive the transgression. A few of the kings, led by Yudhājit, declared war. Sudarṣana, fighting alone, killed them. Dēvi then appeared to Sudarṣana. Sudarṣana asked his father-in-law to pray to Dēvi. Sudarṣana, accompanied by his wife, went to Ayōdhya and assumed the throne. Dēvi told him to always worship Her. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Sudarṣana VII** – Son of Sudarṣana (*daughter of King Duryōdhana and Narmada*) and Agni (*the God of Fire*). He had a son named Ōghavanta. Ōghavanta had a son named Ōgharatha and a daughter named Ōghavati. Unable to find a suitable match for her after searching everywhere, Ōghavanta gave Ōghavati in marriage to his father Sudarṣana. Sudarṣana was determined to defeat death while remaining a Gṛhasta (*family man; the point is that the spiritual power necessary for such an achievement is normally possible only to those who renounce family life and as Sanyāsis, perform sincere Tapas**) by worshipping (*serving*) Atithis (*house guests*). He taught his wife Ōghavati that providing hospitality to Atithis was of primary importance and that even if an Atithi wanted to make love to her, she should satisfy his desire. Dharma Dēva (*the God of Righteousness*), wanting to test Sudarṣana, came to his house as an Atithi when Sudarṣana was away from home. Ōghavati served him with every thing a guest would want. But the Atithi was not satisfied. He told her he wanted

to sleep with her. She was unable to say anything. Considering that committing adultery was a sin, but if she rejected the Atithi, he would be displeased, and she would be violating her husband's instructions to her, she took the Atithi to a secret place. Right then, Sudarṣana came home and called out to his wife. Since the Atithi told her to keep quiet and not answer, she remained silent. Sudarṣana sneaked a peek at them. The Atithi said your wife is giving me hospitality. Sudarṣana replied that he is very happy that his wife was following his instructions. The Dharma Dēva then assumed his true form and congratulated Sudarṣana and told him "I came to test you. You truly succeeded in defeating death. Whenever you need something, just 'think of'* me. You will go to the afterlife with your physical body." *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sudāsa** – A king of the Sūrya (*solar; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Chandra, or lunar*) dynasty. Father of Kalmāshapāda. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sudēva I** – Wife of Dēvātithi's son Ṛchīka. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sudēva II** – King of Vidarbha, father of Ṣvēta. His second son was Suratha. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sudēva III** – A soldier in the service of King Ambarīsha. When Ambarīsha went to Indra* Sabha (*court*) after his death, he saw Sudēva on a beautiful flying vehicle. He said, "I performed many Yagjnas. This Sudēva was one of my many soldiers and he had not performed even a single Yagjna. How could he come here?" Indra replied "Once, when the Asuras* Sadama, Vidama, and Dama attacked your city, you directed him to go and kill them. Realizing that he had no force capable of taking on the Asuras, he prayed to

Lord Ṣiva and by His grace, he obtained powerful weapons and killed the Asuras using them. The Raṇa Yagjna (*Yāga of War*) he performed was the equivalent of the Yāgas you performed. That is why he is here." *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sudēva IV** – A king. Once, he went to a garden accompanied by his wives and a friend Nala (*not the husband of Damayanti*). There Nala fell in love with the wife of a Muni named Pramati. Pramati came to Sudēva and asked why he does not punish Nala for his evil desire and behaviour. Sudēva, facetiously pretended to be not a king and said "I am but a merchant (*a Vaiṣya, the caste below Brahmins and Kshatriya or warrior caste, to which, as a king, he actually belonged*); how can I punish him?" Aware that Sudēva was a king and was lying to him, the Muni gave Nala a Ṣāpa* that he would turn to water and gave Sudēva a Ṣāpa that he would, in fact, become a Vaiṣya. Sudēva, regretting his lie, begged Pramati for a means of release from the Ṣāpa. The Muni said "Your daughter when you are a Vaiṣya will marry a Kshatriya. Their son Bhananda will fight a war. You will be released from your Vaiṣya caste then." Sudēva was accordingly born as a Vaiṣya. A daughter named Suprabha (*Kṛpāvati in a previous life, born as a Vaiṣya due to a Ṣāpa by Sage Vasishṭha; her release from her Ṣāpa and Sudēva's release from his were both keyed to Bhananda fighting a war*) was born to him. A son Bhananda was born to her. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Sudēva V** – Son of the king of Kāṣi* named Haryaṣva. His son was Divōdās. A king named Vītahavya killed Sudēva. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sudēva VI** – A Brahmin. King Bhīma (*father of Damayanti, not one of the Pāṇḍavas*) sent him to search for his daughter and son-in-law Nala. On reaching the city of Subāhu, he joined a group of Brahmins who were going to the royal palace to perform Puṇyāhavāchana (*wish the king an auspicious day*). There he saw a woman wearing dirty clothes, but shining brightly anyway. He concluded, from features such as her eyebrows, that she was, in fact, Damayanti. He gave her news of the wellbeing of her parents and her children. He was also sent to the kingdom of Ṛtuparṇa to search for Nala. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sudēva VII** – Son of Champu and father of Vijaya. *Bhāgavata*

**Sudēvi** – Wife of King Nābhi (*grandfather of Bharata*). Lord Vishṇu Himself was born to her as a Vṛshabha (*a bull*). He was named Vṛshabha. *Bhāgavata*

**Sudhanva I** – Son of a Brahmin named Angirasa. Once, he and Virōchana (*son of Prahlāda and father of Bali*) each argued that he was better qualified than the other in every way. They went to Prahlāda and asked him to judge who was the better qualified man for the woman they both wanted to marry. They threatened that if he did not give a just verdict, he would be killed by Indra's* thunderbolt. Prahlāda suggested that they should go to Kaṣyapa. They said "We came to you to resolve our doubt; if you send us away without clearing our doubt, you will have committed a sin." Prahlāda ruled that Sudhanva (*and not his own son*) was the better man. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sudhanva II** – King of country named Sānkāṣya. He asked King Janaka to give Sīta in marriage to him. When rebuffed, he attacked

Janaka. Janaka killed him and gave his kingdom to his (*Janaka's*) brother Kuṣadhwaja. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sudhanva III** – King of country named Trigarta. He assisted Saindhava (*brother-in-law of Duryōdhana*) who tried to abduct Draupadi in the Kāmyaka forest and the Pāṇḍavas came to battle Saindhava. He was killed by Dharmarāja. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sudhanva IV** – Son of King Hamsadhwaja. When Hamsadhwaja captured the sacrificial horse of Dharmarāja's Aṣvamēdha Yāga*, Arjuna came to fight him to retrieve the horse. Hamsadhwaja asked his son to accompany him into battle.

Sudhanva, prepared to go to battle, saluted his mother with a Namaskāra*, and then went to take leave of his wife. She requested him to give her a gift of his semen. Sudhanva acceded to her request before going to the battlefield. The king, angered by Sudhanva arriving late to the battle, ordered his troops to throw his son into a pot of boiling oil. The soldiers did as they were ordered but Sudhanva was not affected in any way by the boiling oil. His skin was not scalded. Realizing this was no ordinary mortal, they went and reported the event to the king. It was realized that he was not affected by the punishment because he was a devotee of Vishṇu. He was promoted to commander of the army. He fought fiercely but was killed by Arjuna. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Sudharma** – An important assembly hall in Indra's* city. When Viṣvakarma* built the city of Dwāraka for Lord Kṛshṇa, Indra gave this hall to be placed in the city. *Bhāgavata*

**Sudhēshṇa I** – Sister of Gāndhāri. Dhṛtarāshṭra married her as well. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sudhēshṇa II** – Wife of King Virāṭa. During the year the Pāṇḍavas had to remain incognito, Draupadi came to her. She was surprised when a woman with divine good looks and royal demeanor begged her for a position as a servant. She was reluctant to allow someone so beautiful in her household due to fear that her husband might be attracted to her. But she finally agreed to the request. Sudhēshṇa treated Draupadi fairly and kindly. One day, while visiting his sister Sudhēshṇa, Simhabala (*also known as Kīchaka*) saw Draupadi (*who, along with her husbands, was incognito; her name during the incognito year was Mālini. No one in Virāṭa's Kingdom knew that she was Draupadi or that the five men who arrived in the kingdom at about the same time were her husbands, the Pāṇḍavas, until the end of the incognito year*), and lusted for her. He spoke to Sudhēshṇa about his desire for her. Sudhēshṇa tried to reason with him and persuade him that it was wrong for him to want a woman that was not his wife which only increased the intensity of his desire for Mālini. He tried to force himself on her. He was willing to risk his life itself to make love to her. Sudhēshṇa finally felt sorry for his emotional plight and agreed to send Mālini to his quarters. Using the fact that the best selection of wines in the palace were in Simhabala's quarters, she asked Mālini to go and bring some wine for her. Scared by the events that followed (see **Simhabala**), she asked Draupadi to leave her household. The Pāṇḍavas' incognito year came to an end a few days later. Realizing that Mālini was actually Draupadi, she accorded full respect to her. Sudhēshṇa had a son Uttara and a daughter Uttara. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sudhēshṇa III** – Son of Lord Kṛshṇa and Rukmiṇi. *Bhāgavata*

**Sudhēshṇa IV** – Wife of a king named Bali. Her husband directed her to beget Kshētraja* sons by Dīrghatamas. Sudhēshṇa was repulsed by the appearance of the blind Sage and sent her maidservant to his bed in her place. The maidservant had several children by the Sage. Bali assumed they were born to his queen and raised them as his children. Dīrghatamas revealed to the king the truth that the children were born not to queen Sudhēshṇa, but to her servant. The king requested Dīrghatamas again to beget children by his queen and persuaded her to sleep with the Sage. Five sons were born to Sudhēshṇa by Dīrghatamas and they were named Anga, Vanga, Kaḷinga, Puṇḍra, and Ṣunga. They founded five kingdoms which were named after them. These are known today as Bhagalpur, Bengal, Andhra, Rajasahi and Tamravika. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sudhṛti** – Son of Rājavardhana and father of Saudhṛtēya. *Bhāgavata*

**Sudyu** – Son of Chāru of the Pūru dynasty and father of Bahugata. *Bhāgavata*

**Sudyumna I** – Son of Chākshusha Manu*. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Sudyumna II** – Son of Vaivasvata Manu*. He was born as a girl first (see **Ila**). Sage Vasishṭha (*royal priest to kings of the Ikshvāku dynasty*) at the request of Vaivasvata, prayed to Lord Ṣiva to transform her into a boy. Many years later, while on a hunting trip with a large retinue, he entered a forest named Kumāravana and was instantly transformed into a beautiful woman. Every one in his retinue as well as the horses they were riding, became female due to a spell put on the forest by Lord Ṣiva's Consort Pārvati.

Wandering around in the forest, the female Sudyumna (*Ila again*), went to the Āṣram of Budha*, son of Chandra (*the Moon God*). Ila and Budha fell in love with each other and had a son Purūrava. Unhappy about being a woman, Ila 'thought of'* Sage Vasishṭha. Seeing Sudyumna turned into a woman again and unhappy about it, Vasishṭha prayed to Ṣiva again. Ṣiva appeared and said that Sudyumna will alternate between male and female, being a woman for one month, a man for the next and back to a woman and so on. Sudyumna had three sons, Utkala, Gaya, and Vimala. In his old age, he handed the kingdom over to Purūrava and went to the forest to perform Tapas*. *Bhāgavata*

**Sudyumna III** – A king. One day, a Brahmin named Likhita came to him and confessed that he had committed theft and begged to be punished. The king refused to punish Likhita for his act. Likhita, insisting that he was culpable because he ate fruit belonging to his brother in the brother's absence, had both his hands cut off. Sudyumna also achieved a higher spiritual status by properly administering the law of the land (*at the time*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sudyumna IV** – Son of King Supratīka and his wife Kāntimati. He ruled the kingdom jointly with his older brother Durjaya and annexed every country around. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Sughōsha** – The conch (*each great warrior had a conch with a distinct sound, which they used to announce their arrival on the battlefield*) of King Nala. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sugrīva I** – An Asura*. He was sent to Kauṣiki as the emissary of the Asura brothers Ṣumbha and Niṣumbha to ask Her to marry them. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Sugrīva II** – (*Vānara**) Son born to Ṛkshaviraja while he was in female form by Sūrya (*the Sun God*). He was the younger brother of Vāli. Vāli ruled Kishkindha with Sugrīva fully supportive of his brother. One day, an Asura*, Māyāvi, challenged Vāli to a fight. They took the fight outside the city. Sugrīva and Tāra, Vāli's wife, followed them. The Asura entered a cave. Vāli followed him into the cave and killed him there. Sugrīva who was outside the cave, saw streams of blood coming out of the cave. He assumed that it was Vāli who had died, and afraid of what would happen if the Asura came out, Sugrīva blocked the cave mouth with a rock, and returned to the city. Vāli, eventually coming out of the cave, found his brother now married to his wife Tāra, and ruling his kingdom. Assuming that Sugrīva closed the cave knowing that his brother was alive inside in order to steal his wife and kingdom, Vāli beat his brother and drove him from the kingdom. A bitter feud between Vāli and Sugrīva started as a result. Afraid of Vāli, Sugriva lived on Ṛṣyamūka mountain (*there was a Ṣāpa* that Vāli would die if he set foot on this mountain*). Hanumān, Jāmbavanta, Mainda, and Dwivida were his ministers.

When Rāma and Lakshmaṇa came searching for Sita, Sugriva was afraid, not knowing who they were. He sent Hanumān to find out. Learning their reason for coming there, Hanumān told them his king can help them and brought them to Sugrīva. Sugrīva struck up a friendship with them. When they said they were searching for Sīta, he showed them the ornaments tied up in cloth that he found and kept. Rāma recognised them as Sīta's, and felt sad thinking of her plight. Sugrīva then told them the story of how he lived in fear of his mighty brother, who took his wife and drove

him from the kingdom. He asked for Rāma's help and promised to help Him find Sīta. Rāma agreed. Sugrīva, however, doubted if He had the strength to take on his mighty brother. For proof of Rāma's power, he asked Him to break seven Sāla trees at once. Rāma performed the task. Convinced that Rāma can kill Vāli, he challenged his brother to a fight. Vāli came and the brothers started fighting. Rāma, unable to identify which of the fighters was Vāli and which was Sugrīva, did not do anything. Unable to withdtand blows from his brother and disappointed that Rāma did not act, Sugrīva ran away. Rāma explained to him why He could not help. Rāma and Lakshmaṇa asked Sugrīva to challenge his brother again but this time they had Sugrīva wear a garland of flowers. Vāli and Sugrīva fought again. Rāma, hiding behind a tree, hit Vāli with an arrow and killed him. Sugrīva performed funeral rites for his brother. Sugrīva ascended to the throne and took Tāra back as his queen. When some time passed and Sugrīva had made no attempt to search for Sīta, Lakshmaṇa castigated him for failing to do his part of the agreement. Sugrīva then sent Vānaras to search for Sīta. Hanumān, who reached Lanka*, came back and reported that he had seen Sīta. War preparations were made. Sugrīva and his Vānara army accompanied Rāma and fought against the Asuras. After Rāma killed Rāvaṇa, Sugrīva accompanied Rāma, Lakshmaṇa, Sīta and Hanumān to Ayōdhya, Rāma's capital. *Rāmāyaṇa*

(*The following is an alternate story of the origin of Vāli and Sugrīva from a less authoritative source*) Once, during Sage Gautama's absence from his Āṣram, Indra* and Sūrya (*the Sun God*) went to the Āṣram and had sex with the Sage's wife Ahalya.

Two handsome sons were born to her. Assuming that they were his own sons, Gautama raised them. His daughter Anjana informed him that they were not his sons. Gautama gave them a Ṣāpa that if they were not his sons, they would become Vānaras. Accordingly, they became Vānaras, Vāli and Sugrīva. A Vānara king, Ṛkshaviraja adopted them. Once, while Sugrīva was traveling through the Mandara forest, Tāra saw Sugrīva, fell in love with him and married him. *Vichitra Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sugrīva III** – One of the horses drawing Lord Kṛshṇa's chariot. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Suhōtra I** – Son of Kshatravṛddha. Kāṣya, Kuṣa (*different from Rāma's son*), and Kṛtsnamada were his sons. *Bhāgavata*

**Suhōtra II** – Son of Sahadēva and his wife Vijaya (*each of the Pānḍavas had at least one other wife for himself alone, in addition to Draupadi, whom they all shared*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Suhōtra III** – Son of Bhumanyu and husband of Suvarṇa. Hasti, who built the city of Hastināpura (*capital of the Kaurava empire*) was his son. It used to rain golden fish in his kingdom which he would give to those in need. Suhōtra performed many Rājasūya Yāgas*, and was a generous donor. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sujanmakṛttu** – Son of King Sōmaka. He had one hundred sons. Drupada (*father of Draupadi*) was the son of his youngest son, Pṛshata. *Bhāgavata*

**Sujāta** – Wife of Ēkapāda and mother of Ashṭāvakra. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sujyēshṭha** – Son of King Agnimitra and father of Vasumitra.

*Bhāgavata*

**Ṣuka I** – Son of Vēda Vyāsa. Once, as Vyāsa performed Tapas* on the Mēru mountain, Lord Ṣiva appeared before him. Asked to choose a boon, Vyāsa requested a son who embodies the attributes of the Pancha Bhūta (*five elements*). Ṣiva granted the boon. Ṣuka was born to Vyāsa as a result of the boon, in the following manner: While Vyāsa was churning kindling to start a fire for religious observances, he happened to see the Apsara* Ghṛtāchi. Knowing that Vyāsa was likely to be romantically inclined, but a little fearful of his reaction, she began to flutter around, assuming the form of a parrot. While working to start the holy fire, Vyāsa was distracted by sexual desire at the sight of Ghṛtāchi. He spontaneously ejaculated. The semen fell into the fire, from which Ṣuka was born. Because Vyāsa was driven by sexual desire while looking at a parrot, Ṣuka took on some aspects of a parrot (*Ṣuka is Sanskrit for 'parrot'*). *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

Ṣuka, thus born, received his Danḍa (*Danḍa is a T-shaped stick on which a Muni sometimes rests his elbow; the Danḍa is especially powerful as it provides a sort of spiritual barrier to anyone intending harm to the Muni*) and Kamanḍala* from the sky. After he learnt the Vēdas from his father, he requested Vyāsa to teach him the path to Mukti*. Vyāsa suggested that he go and learn it from King Janaka. Ṣuka accordingly crossed over the Himālaya mountains and reached Janaka's city. As he walked around, he did not seem to see any of the objects in view. Considering his behaviour quite unusual, the palace guards informed the king of his arrival. King Janaka invited him to the palace and received him with great respect. Ṣuka learnt many

things from Janaka (*Janaka was famous for his knowledge and wisdom, so much so that he is considered a Rājarshi, or royal Sage*).

Among other things, Janaka taught Ṣuka that he must experience domestic life. Accordingly, Ṣuka married a woman named Pīvari. Sons named Kṛshṇa, Gauraprabhu, Bhūri, and Dēvaṣrava and a daughter named Kīrti were born to Ṣuka and Pīvari.

Ṣuka never stayed very long in any one place. However, he never left a place without answering any question asked by anyone. It was thus that as King Parīkshit (*Abhimanyu's son*) sat down in Prāyōpavishṭa*, Ṣuka narrated the Bhāgavata to him in seven days. As soon as he explained one subject, the king would ask another question.

Once, as Ṣuka was reciting the Vēdas with his father, a violent wind began to blow. Saying the conditions were unsuitable for Vēdic chanting, Vyāsa stopped and went to take a bath. Just then, Sage Nārada arrived and saying "I am here to help you" he proceeded to teach philosophy to Ṣuka. Convinced thus to seek Mukti by going to Kailāsa, Ṣuka flew up into the sky. As he passed by, he told the animals, birds, trees, rocks, and rivers, that his father will shout out his name, searching for him and that they should all respond as if they were Ṣuka. As he went by a city where Siddhas (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers*) served the Dēvas, divine women were bathing naked in the open. They noticed Ṣuka passing by but made no attempt to cover themselves, and he paid no attention to them. Soon after, Vyāsa came that way, searching for his son. As soon as they saw Vyāsa, the women hurriedly covered themselves. When Vyāsa asked them

why they responded differently to him and his son, they replied 'Even though Ṣuka is young, he is dispassionate, unmoved by stimuli, fixated on his Tapas, and knows the nature of the Supreme Being. He is not an ordinary man. That is why we were not embarrassed to be naked while he was going by."

After a while, Ṣuka merged with nature, composed of the five elements. As Vyāsa came by shouting "O Ṣuka!" the trees, rivers, animals and mountains responded "Yes!" *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣuka II** – An Asura*. Father of Vṛka. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣuka and Sāraṇa** – Spies in the service of Rāvaṇa. They approached Sugrīva as he was encamped with his army and advised him to desert Rāma. They also counseled him not to oppose Rāvaṇa. They later returned, disguised as Vānaras* to gauge the strength of Rāma's forces. Vibhīshaṇa (*Rāvaṇa's youngest brother, who abandoned his brother and allied himself with Rāma*), however, recognised them and had them captured. The Vānaras wanted to kill them, but Rāma saved their lives on the basis that even enemies must not be killed if they were not armed when caught. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sukanya** – Daughter of King Ṣaryāti. One day, while strolling through a garden with her father, she saw flashes of light from an anthill and poked into it with a stick. A Sage named Chyavana who was covered by the anthill, was performing Tapas* and sustained injuries from the stick. The Sage became angry and by his spiritual power, caused Ṣaryāti's retinue to lose the ability to excrete body wastes. Ṣaryāti, realizing that his daughter's thoughtless act was the reason for the suffering of his retinue, went to the anthill and

prayed to the Sage. Chyavana told him he would restore his men's bodily functions if the king gave his daughter in marriage to him. Ṣaryāti gave his daughter in marriage to Chyavana. Sukanya, by her diligence in caring for her husband, impressed the quick-to-anger Sage.

One day, after Sukanya was married to Chyavana, the Aṣvins (*handsome twin physicians to the Dēvas*) saw Sukanya and said "O beautiful lady! Why do you live with this old man? Come with us; we will show you a suitable husband." Annoyed by their words, Sukanya told Chyavana what they said. Chyavana asked the Aṣvins to restore his youth. They asked him to accompany them, and all three bathed in the nearby river. When they emerged from the water, all three looked like identical, very handsome youths. Sukanya was asked to pick out her husband from among them. Unable to identify her husband, she prayed to the Aṣvins. They took their own forms and left Chayavana as a handsome youth.

After this event, Ṣaryāti went to Chyavana's Āṣram to invite his daughter and son-in-law to a Yāga he was about to perform. Seeing his daughter living with a handsome youth instead of the old Sage to whom he married her, Ṣaryāti was saddened, thinking that his daughter abandoned the old man and is living in sin. Sukanya explained to him that the Aṣvins granted her husband the gift of youthfulness and good looks. Ṣaryāti was relieved and pleased at the turn of events. Sukanya and Chyavana had a son named Pramati. *Mahā Bhārata; Bhāgavata*

**Sukarma** – Son of Sumanta and grandson of Jaimini. He was well-versed in the Vēdas. His disciples included Sahasra,

Paushyanji and Kauṣalya. Once, Indra* punished Sahasra without a valid reason, which angered Sukarma. Fearing the anger of a Brahmin, Indra came to Sukarma, begged his pardon, and gave him boons. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Sukēṣa** – Son of the Asura Vidyutkēṣa and his wife Sālakaṭanka. His mother gave birth to him on the Malaya mountain, left him there, and rejoined her husband. Lord Siva and His Consort Parvati saw the child, and impressed by his beauty, gave him boons that he would be endowed with Tejas*, strength, and his own city. In consideration of his wealth and power, a Gandharva* named Grāmaṇi gave his daughter Dēvavati to him in marriage. They had three sons, Mālyavanta, Sumāli and Māli. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sukēṣi I** – Daughter of the king of Vidarbha and wife of King Sagara. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Sukēṣi II** – Daughter of Hēti (*son of Manu* named Swāyambhu*). She, and her uncle's daughter Mitrakēṣi, were strolling in the garden of Kubēra (*God of Wealth*) accompanied by companions including Ratnavati and Kadaḷika, when they saw a king named Durjaya, and fell in love with him. Hēti learned of this from Sukēṣi's companions. He gave her in marriage to Durjaya. They had a son named Suprabhu. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Sukētu I** – A Yaksha (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers*). He performed Tapas* directed towards Lord Brahma, in order to beget offspring. A daughter, with the strength of a thousand elephants, was born to him. Sukētu gave her in marriage to Sunda. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sukētu II** – A king who fought on the Pāṇḍava side in the Mahā Bhārata war. He was killed by Kṛpa (*archery Guru to the Kauravas*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣukra I** – Guru of the Asuras*. Son of Bhṛgu (*also known as Kavi*) and his wife Uṣana. Ṣukra married Ūrjasvati, the daughter of Priyavrata. They had sons named Chanḍa, Amarka, Twāshṭra, and Dharātra.

Ṣukra and Bṛhaspati (*Guru of the Dēvas*) were receiving their education from Bṛhaspati's father, Angirasa. Angirasa was discriminating between these two disciples. Ṣukra, therefore, left Angirasa and went to Sage Gautama and requested him to accept himself as a disciple. Gautama told him "Ṣiva is the Guru of the whole world. If you worship Him, all the knowledge in the world will be yours." Ṣukra went to the banks of the Gautami river and performed Tapas* directed towards Ṣiva. Ṣiva appeared to him and taught him Mṛta Sanjīvani (*Sanskrit for 'revives the dead'*).

Ṣukra, from then on, was reviving Asuras who died in battle. This made it impossible for the Dēvas to defeat the Asuras, as their ranks were getting constantly replenished. In particular, they were getting frustrated because, however hard they tried, they were unable to kill Andhakāsura. They went to Ṣiva and complained to Him about how Ṣukra was using what he learned from Him. Ṣiva then swallowed Ṣukra. In Ṣukra's absence, Andhakāsura was killed. Afterwards, Ṣiva allowed Ṣukra to leave His body in the form of semen. Ṣukra then returned to his normal form. (*Kāṣi Khanḍa is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Kāṣi Khanḍa*

Once, Ṣukra stole all the wealth of Kubēra (*God of Wealth*) by fraud. Kubēra informed Ṣiva of Ṣukra's misdeed. Ṣiva went on a

search for Ṣukra in order to punish him. Ṣukra hid behind some bushes for a while but Ṣiva eventually found him. Ṣiva swallowed him and shut down all the orifices in His body other than His penis. When Ṣukra begged Ṣiva to let him out, Ṣiva told him to leave through His penis. Ṣukra exited through that orifice.

Reasoning that since Ṣukra had emerged from Ṣiva's stomach he was also like Her son, Pārvati requested Ṣiva to bless him. Ṣiva agreed and conferred Tējas* on him and granted that since he emerged through His penis, he shall be known as Ṣukra.

The Dēvas sent Kacha (*son of Bṛhaspati, the Guru of the Dēvas*) to Ṣukra with a mission to learn the Mṛta Sanjīvani technique. Kacha was accepted as a disciple and was serving him along with Ṣukra's other disciples, mostly Asuras. The Asuras did not like the possibility of the Dēvas learning Mṛta Sanjīvani through Kacha. They killed Kacha to prevent it. Because Kacha had become friends with his daughter Dēvayāni, Ṣukra brought him back to life using Mṛta Sanjīvani. The Asuras again killed Kacha and this time, cremated his body, mixed the ashes with wine and gave it to Ṣukra. Unaware of the crime of his Asura disciples, Ṣukra drank it. Dēvayāni, concerned that Kacha had not returned from the forest, refused to take any food until she saw him again. Ṣukra, using his spiritual power of Yōga Dṛshṭi*, discovered the crime perpetrated by the Asuras. He then taught Mṛta Sanjīvani to Kacha who was in his stomach. Using the technique, Kacha came back to life and came out of Ṣukra's stomach by tearing it apart. Ṣukra died in the process and was brought back to life by Kacha using his new-found knowledge. *Mahā Bhārata*

Once, as Ṣukra was performing Tapas, Indra* sent his daughter

Jayanti to disrupt it. Ṣukra saw her after he obtained boons from Lord Brahma by finishing his Tapas. He then took her home and made love to her. Dēvayāni was born to her as the result.

At the time Ṣukra was enjoying sex with Jayanti, Bṛhaspati, with a view to deceiving the Asuras, assumed the form of Ṣukra and lived among them. The Asuras assumed he was their Guru and shared strategic secrets with Bṛhaspati. Ṣukra then returned. Seeing two men who looked exactly like their Guru, the Asuras were unable to identify the real Ṣukra from the impostor. Each "Ṣukra" kept claiming he is the real Ṣukra and the other was the impostor. A battle ensued between them. Eventually, Bṛhaspati disappeared. *Matsya Purāṇa*

(*The story above has a slight twist, in another Purāṇa*) When the real Ṣukra came back after being absent for years while he was enjoying a romantic interlude with Jayanti, the Asuras asserted that the one that had been with them all that time was the real Ṣukra. Ṣukra became angry with them and gave the Asuras a Ṣāpa* that they would be defeated by the Dēvas. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

Ṣukra was extremely fond of his daughter Dēvayāni. He would do anything to make her happy. So, when Ṣarmishṭha, the daughter of King Vṛshaparva in whose Sabha (*court*) Ṣukra was living as the royal Guru, insulted his daughter, Dēvayāni refused to stay in Vṛshaparva's city. Ṣukra also left the city along with his daughter. Vṛshaparva begged Ṣukra to return and brought Ṣukra and Dēvayāni back by giving his daughter to Dēvayāni as her maidservant.

Dēvayāni wished to marry King Yayāti (*the marriage protocol at the time was that a man of any caste can marry a woman of his*

*own or any lower caste. Since the hierarchy of castes had Brahmins above Kshatriyas, the Kshatriya Yayāti would normally not be allowed to marry the Brahmin Dēvayāni*). Ṣukra agreed and decreed that it was acceptable for his daughter to marry the lower caste Yayāti. Later on, when Dēvayāni told him that Yayāti had insulted her, Ṣukra gave him a Ṣāpa.

Once upon a time, Vāmana (*the fifth and the first fully human incarnation of Lord Vishṇu. The sequence of Lord Vishṇu's incarnations, fish [marine life]; tortoise [amphibian]; boar [mammal]; man-lion [hybrid] and human for the rest seems to have described evolutionary progression*), came to the Asura emperor Bali and asked for three feet worth of land. Bali, surprised at how small a gift the boy wanted, insisted that he ask for something of greater value. Ṣukra, the Guru of the Asuras, realized through his spiritual power that the boy was, in fact, Vishṇu come to suppress the powerful Bali. He advised Bali not to give Vāmana his wish, sensing that the gift Vāmana wanted would be the means by which Bali would be neutralized. Bali refused to break his promise. When Bali was about to give Vāmana the three feet of land and signifying the donation with holy water, Ṣukra assumed the form of an insect and lodged himself in the spout of the Kamanḍala* to prevent the donation. Vāmana, realizing Ṣukra's attempt to save Bali from Him, used a small twig to clear the spout. Ṣukra became blind in one eye as a result of being poked with the twig. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣukra II** – Son of Havirdhāna. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Sukṛṣa** – A Muni. Son of Vipula. Once, to test his righteousness and integrity, Indra* took the form of a (*articulate*) bird and

requested the Muni to give him human flesh as his meal. Sukṛṣa summoned his sons and asked them to become the meal for the bird. They rejected his request. Angry at the rejection, he gave a Ṣāpa* to his sons and asked the bird to eat him instead. When the bird said he would not eat the flesh of a living person, he used his Yōga Ṣakti (*Sanskrit for 'spiritual power'*) for his soul to leave his body. Indra showed his original form, gave boons to Sukṛṣa and left. Sukṛṣa's sons were born as the Dharma birds. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Ṣuktimati** – A river (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*) flowing near the kingdom of Chēdi. A mountain named Kōlāhala (*in the Purāṇas, mountains are anthropomorphed into men*) fell in love with her. Their union resulted in the birth of a son named Vasupada and a daughter named Girika.

Their lovemaking caused Kōlāhala to block the river Ṣuktimati from flowing. King Uparicharavasu of Chēdi kicked the mountain with his feet and cleared the way for the river to flow. A grateful river gave her son and daughter to the king. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sukumāra** – The mechanic who maintained the wheels of Dharmarāja's chariots. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sukumāri** – Daughter of King Sṛnjaya. Once, when Sages Nārada and Parvata (*nephew of Nārada*) visited Sṛnjaya, he sent his daughter to look after their comfort. Nārada fell in love with her and asked Sṛnjaya for his daughter's hand in marriage. Sṛnjaya honoured the request. As soon as he got married, Nārada's face was transformed into a monkey face, due to a Ṣāpa* by Parvata.

Sukumāri continued to perform her wifely duties to her husband in spite of the change to his face. Some time later, Parvata happened to see Nārada in a garden. They agreed to release each other from their Ṣāpas. When Nārada returned home, Sukumāri thought he was a stranger and walked away. Parvata came and explained to her that his and Nārada's Ṣāpas were cancelled. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sulabha** – A woman who was knowledgeable in the fundamental nature of the universe and the Supreme Being. She went to the Sabha (*court*) of King Janaka as a beautiful Sanyāsi (*ascetic*), and engaged in a discourse on Vēdānta. Using her spiritual power, she entered Janaka's mind to test him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sulakshaṇa** – Daughter of Priyavrata (*a resident of the city of Kāṣi**) and his wife Ṣubhavrata. Her father died of worry that his daughter was born in an inauspicious moment. Sometime later, her mother also died. Grieving for both her parents, she went to a place of pilgrimage north of Kāṣi where one of the Dwādaṣādityas (*twelve suns*), Uttarārka lived, and prayed to Lord Ṣiva. A goat sat by her constantly while she was praying. When Ṣiva appeared to her and offered her a boon, she asked Him to give a boon to the goat before giving her a boon. Ṣiva gave a boon that the goat will be born as the daughter of the king of Kāṣi. Sulakshaṇa, by the boon from Ṣiva, became one of the companions of His Consort, Pārvati. Uttarārka, where a Barkara (*goat*) was blessed by Ṣiva, acquired the name Barkari Tīrtha*. (*Kāṣi Khaṇḍa is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Kāṣi Khaṇḍa*

**Sumada** – He was one of the older fifty of sage Viṣvāmitra's one

hundred sons. He refused to accept Ṣunaṣṣēpha as his older brother and received a Ṣāpa* from the Sage. *Bhāgavata*

**Sumāli** – Son of Sukēṣa. Māli and Mālyavanta were his brothers. Wishing to obtain wealth and power, he and his brothers performed Tapas* directed towards Lord Brahma and obtained boons from Him because of which they became vain and arrogant. They lived in the city of Lanka* built by Viṣvakarma*. Sumāli married Kētumati, daughter of a Gandharva* woman named Narmada. Prahasta, Akampana, Vikaṭa, Ṣakaṭīmukha, Dhūmrāksha, Daṇḍa, Supārṣva, Samhrādi, and Praghana were their sons. Bāla, Pushpōtkaṭa, Kaikasi, and Kumbhīnasa were their daughters. Once, Sumāli and Māli attacked Indra* Lōka (*Indra's world, in heaven*). Garutmanta* killed Māli. Sumāli, fearing for his life, hid in Rasātala (*a netherworld; abode of Asuras**). After Rāvaṇa obtained boons from Lord Brahma, Sumāli went to him and said "O! Rāvaṇa! We used to live in Lanka. The Dēvas expelled us. Now Kubēra (*the God of wealth; half-brother of Rāvaṇa*) occupies it. Take Lanka from him." Rāvaṇa followed his advice and drove Kubēra out of Lanka and brought the Asuras back. Sumāli also then returned to Lanka. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sumālini** – Daughter of King Vīravarma of the city of Sārasvata. When she reached marriageable age, her father asked her who she would like to marry. She said "Yama (*the God of Death*) will take away any human some time! So, what is the point in marrying a man and mourn his death? Therefore, I will marry Yama himself." She was constantly performing Vratas* worshipping Yama. Sage Nārada informed Yama of her determination to marry him. Giving advance notice that he is arriving soon, Yama took human form

and married Sumālini. When he asked Sumālini after the marriage what her fondest wish was, she told him that the only thing she wants is to be able to view Lord Kṛshṇa's lotus-like feet. When Dharmarāja's sacrificial horse from his Aṣvamēdha Yāga* came by, King Vīravarma captured it. Kṛshṇa and Arjuna came to fight and retrieve the horse. Her wish was fulfilled when she saw Kṛshṇa. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sumālya** – One of the sons of Mahāpadma. He and his seven brothers ruled the entire (*then known*) earth. *Bhāgavata*

**Sumanasa** – Son of Ūru and grandson of Chākshusha Manu*. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Sumanta I** – Disciple of Sage Kṛshṇa Dwaipāyana (*another name of Vyāsa*). In the beginning, the Vēdas were all combined together with no demarcation. Sumanta, collaborating with fellow disciples Pyla, Vaiṣampāyana, and Jaimini, collated them into four distinct divisions (*Ṛg, Sāma, Yajur, and Atharva*). He specialised in the Atharva Vēda. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sumanta II** – Son of Jaimini, who was a disciple of Kṛshṇa Dwaipāyana. He split the Sāma Vēda, which he had learnt from his father, into one thousand parts and taught it to Hiraṇyanābha and to his own son Paushpanji. *Bhāgavata*

**Sumantra I** – Chariot-driver for King Daṣaratha. He was also the chariot-driver for Lord Rāma. He drove the chariot when Sīta was left in the forest. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sumantra II** – One of the counselors of King Daṣaratha. He was assisting both Daṣaratha and Rāma in all their actions. When

Ṛṣyaṣṛnga needed to be brought to Ayōdhya, he was the one who sent beautiful courtesans to bring him (*Ṛṣyaṣṛnga, who had never seen a female, assumed they were the sons of Munis like himself, who came to take him to their Āṣram*). When Rāma was about to depart for the forest to start the fourteen-year exile, he offered to accompany Him but Rāma told him to stay. Daṣaratha, Bharata (*while he was the regent while Rāma was away*), and Rāma never took any action without seeking his advice. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sumati I** – Daughter of Vinata and Sage Kaṣyapa. Wife of King Sagara. She and her Sapatni (*Sanskrit for 'wives of the same man'*) accompanied their husband to the Āṣram of Sage Aurva. Sagara prayed to Aurva wishing for sons. Aurva told Sagara and his wives that one of the wives will have one son who will live till the end of the epoch, and that the other wife will have sixty thousand sons who will be cruel and live only a short time. Sumati chose to have the sixty thousand sons. At first, only one son was born to her. Aurva then came and cut him into sixty thousand pieces. A son emerged from each of those pieces. *Vishṇu Purāṇa; Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Sumati II** – Son of Sōmadatta. His son was Janamējaya (*different from Arjuna's great-grandson*). *Bhāgavata*

**Sumati III** – Son of Kakutstha and grandson of Sōmadatta. King of a country named Viṣāla. He played host to Lord Rāma and Lakshmaṇa when they accompanied Sage Viṣvāmitra. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sumati IV** – Son of Antisāra and grandson of Ṛtēpu. His son was Raibhya. *Bhāgavata*

**Sumati V** – Daughter of Prajāpati* Arishṭanēmi. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sumati VI** – Eldest wife of King Vajrabāhu, of the country named Daṣārṇa. While she was pregnant, she was drugged by her jealous Sapatnis (*wives of the same man*). She gave birth to a son. But she and her son were sickly. Annoyed by their condition, Vajrabāhu abandoned them in the forest. She somehow managed to reach the home of a Vaiṣya (*person of merchant caste, which is third in the hierarchy, below Brahmin and Kshatriya or warrior caste*) and was welcomed with respect by his wife. However, her son died. When she was engulfed in grief over her son's death, a Yōgi came to her and was trying to help her overcome the grief. She could not be consoled and asked him to help her kill herself. Taking pity on her, the Yōgi, using his spiritual power, covered the dead child's body with holy ash and brought him back to life. He named the revived boy Bhadrāyu. The king of Magadha had defeated Bhadrāyu's father in war and took his kingdom. Bhadrāyu later defeated the king of Magadha and returned the kingdom to his father (*appears that the father did not know the benefactor was the son he had abandoned*).

Vajrabāhu attended Bhadrāyu's wedding and found out that Bhadrāyu was his son, and that his wife Sumati was alive. He welcomed them back into the family and crowned Bhadrāyu king after him. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Sumati VII** – Daughter of a Brahmin named Makaradhwaja and wife of Kauṣika. *Vichitra Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sumati VIII** – Son of Vṛshabha's son Bharata. His wife was Dhruvasēna. He succeeded Bharata to the throne. His son was Dēvatājit. A group of heretics taught him their religion, telling him they will worship him as they did the Buddha. *Bhāgavata*

**Sumati IX** – Son of Vidūratha. He tried to rescue his sister Mudāvati when she was abducted by the Asura Kujambha, but was himself taken and held captive. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Sumati X** – Descendant of Nṛga, son of Vaivasvata Manu*. His son was Bhūtajyōti. *Bhāgavata*

**Sumati XI** –. Son of Vītihōtra of the lineage of Vaivasvata Manu's son Narishyanta. His son was Satyaṣrava. *Bhāgavata*

**Sumati XII** – Wife of Vishṇuyaṣa and mother of Kalki (*the future, tenth incarnation of Lord Vishṇu*). *Kalki (Bhavishya) Purāṇa*

**Ṣumbha and Niṣumbha** – Asura* brothers. They became very powerful by worshipping Lord Brahma and obtaining many boons from Him. One of those boons was that they could not be killed by any male. As they started to steal portions of Havya*, the Dēvas begged Dēvi to destroy them. A Goddess emerged from Dēvi's body. Her name was Kauṣiki. Chanḍa and Munḍa, two warriors in the service of Ṣumbha and Niṣumbha happened to see Her and reported back to Ṣumbha and Niṣumbha that such a beautiful woman must become theirs. Ṣumbha and Niṣumbha sent an Asura named Sugrīva as their emissary to Her asking Her to accept them as Her husbands. Kauṣiki sent the emissary back with the message that She will marry only someone who defeats Her in battle. With orders to abduct and bring Her to them, Ṣumbha and Niṣumbha sent Asuras Dhūmralōchana, Chanḍa, Munḍa and Raktabīja. Kauṣiki killed them all. Finally, Ṣumbha and Niṣumbha entered the fray. Dēvi fought and killed them. (*Dēvī Bhāgavata contains a more detailed chapter on Ṣumbha and Niṣumbha and their interaction with Dēvi, the main points are the same*) *Mārkanḍēya*

*Purāṇa*

**Sumēdha** – Son of a Brahmin named Varamitra. He and a friend, Sōmavanta, had their Upanayanam* performed by their fathers, and completed their education in the Vēdas. It was suggested that they visit the king of the country to earn an income. When they went to see the king, he told them "A princess named Sīmantini is giving gifts of money and gold to married couples. Disguise youselves as a husband and wife and get gifts from her." Hoping to quickly earn enough money to start their careers, they followed the king's suggestion, with Sōmavanta disguised as a woman. Sīmantini gave them gifts assuming them to be husband and wife. As soon as they were seen by Sīmantini, however, the fake woman truly became a woman. When they went home, they and their parents were upset. They all went to the king who suggested the deception, and complained to him that one of the young men became a woman by acting on his suggestion. The king prayed to Lord Ṣiva hoping to get the sex change reversed but was told that since Sīmantini, a Pativrata* saw him as a woman, he will remain so. *Skānda Purāṇa; Brahma Purāṇa*

**Sumitra I** – Wife of King Daṣaratha. Being without a son, Daṣaratha performed a Putra Kāmēshṭi Yāga*. Daṣaratha gave half the pudding to his first wife Kausalya and half to his favourite wife Kaikēyi. Each of them gave half her portion to Sumitra. Lakshmaṇa and Shatrughna were born to her. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sumitra II** – A king. Once, on a hunt, he hit an animal with an arrow; the animal continued to run with the arrow lodged in it. He chased the animal on foot and exhausted, he reached the Āṣram of

a Muni. The Muni, named Ṛshabha, provided refreshments and asked him what brought him there. Sumitra cited the desire for the animal he was chasing. The Muni then said "Once, while on a pilgrimage, I visited the Āṣram of a Muni named Tanu. At the same time, a king named Vīradyumna, who had just lost a son, also came there. The Muni consoled the king, saying that the way to happiness is to stay away from desire." *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sumitra III** – A Muni. A friend of his, Angirasa, once gave him a cow. His cow mated with a bull and became pregnant. Her offspring grew in number over time. Sumitra was tending the cows, feeding them, and subsisted on the Phēna (*foam*) on the cows' udders after the calves drank the milk. He thus acquired the name Phēnapa. One day, his cows saw other cows in human female forms that were bathing in a lake. Sumitra's cows, in human voices, asked them "How were you able to take the form of women? How can we gain your ability?" The women answered "Rantidēva is preparing to perform a Yāga. Become sacrificial animals in it to fulfill your desire." One of Sumitra's cows pointed out that they were the property of Sumitra and cannot leave without his permission. Some Kapila (*yellow*) cows suggested that they should kill Sumitra. Those cows, which had Kāma Rūpiṇi (*shape-shifting*) powers, took alternate forms and approaching Sumitra, said "We are Gōmāta (*mother cows*). We are pleased with your guardianship of cows and want to give you a boon. What would you like?" He said he wanted cows to continue to treat him with respect and friendship. Saying "We grant you that. But why live in this world? Come to Gō Lōka, world of cows, in heaven." When he asked how that would be possible, they rendered him

unconscious by their Yōga Bala (*spiritual power*) and killed him, stomping on him with their hooves and hitting him with their horns until his body was turned into pulp. Sumitra found himself in Gō Lōka. Some Gōmātas there told him about how they can assume the form of women. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sumitra IV** – Son of Suratha and grandson of Ṛṇaka. He was the last scion of the Sūrya Vamṣa (*solar dynasty; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Chandra, or lunar*). *Bhagavata*

**Sumukha I** – Son of a Nāga* king named Chikura and grandson of Āryaka. Garutmanta* killed Chikura and announced that he will kill Sumukha within a month. Meanwhile, Mātali (*Indra's* chariot-driv*er) came to Āryaka and expressed his intention to give his daughter Guṇakēṣi in marriage to Sumukha. Āryaka said he will not perform his grandson's marriage because the boy is not going to live long. Mātali prayed to Indra and received a boon that Sumukha will have a long life. Sumukha was married to Guṇakēṣi. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sumukha II** – A Vidyādhara (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers*). One day, as he was returning after a visit with Indra*, his face became a tiger's face, due to past Karma. Sage Bhṛgu, seeing him thus, asked "Why are you like this? Who are you?" He narrated his story to the Sage. Bhṛgu informed him that his face changed thus because, in the month of Māgha (*one of the winter months*), he had fasted on Ēkādaṣi (*the eleventh day of the lunar cycle*) and washed his head on Dwādaṣi (*twelfth day*). (*Appears that the implication is that he did not wash his hair on the eleventh day.*) *Padma Purāṇa*

**Ṣunā Dēvi** – Wife of Varuṇa (*the God of Rain*). *Vāyu Purāṇa*

**Ṣunaka I** – Son of Samudra (*the Ocean God*) and father of Sage Ṣaunaka. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣunaka II** – Son of Gṛtsnamada and father of Ṣaunaka. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣunaka III** – Disciple of Pathya. He studied the Atharva Vēda. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣunaka IV** – Minister to King Puranjaya. He killed the king and assumed the throne. His son was Pradyōtana. *Bhāgavata*

**Sunanda I** – Female companion of Indumati (*an ancestor of Lord Rāma*). She introduced to Indumati the princes and kings who attended her Swayamvara*. *Raghu Vaṃśa*

**Sunanda II** – Son of Jambha. He married Tāṭaka. A son Mārīcha was born to them. Once, Sunanda and Mārīcha, feeling hungry, tried to swallow Sage Agastya. The Sage gave them a Ṣāpa* that they will become Asuras*. Since then, Tāṭaka and Sunanda behaved as Asuras, harassing Brahmins and destroying the Yāgas of Munis. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sunanda III** – Wife of Pratīpa. Dēvāpi, Ṣantanu, and Bāhlika were their sons. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sunanda IV** – Wife of Bharata, son of King Dushyanta. Her son was Bhumanyu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sunanda V** – Wife of Sārvabhauma and mother of Jayatsēna. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sunanda VI** – A club-like weapon created by Viṣvakarma*. It

belonged to an Asura* named Kujambha. It had the power to defeat even the strongest foe and had an attribute that it will lose its power if it is touched by the hand of a female. A woman named Mudāvati, who was abducted by Kujambha, touched it with her hand. Ṣēshu (*a huge multi-hooded serpent on which Lord Vishṇu rests while on the ocean*), whom she invoked while touching the Sunanda, gave the name Sunanda to Mudāvati. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Sunanda VII** – Daughter of the king of Chēdi. Her mother was the elder sister of Damayanti's mother. She told her mother that the Sairandhri cried while talking to the Brahmin. *Mahā Bhārata*

(*As it happens sometimes in the multitude of Purāṇas composed at different times by different Sages, the two stories about someone named Ṣunaṣṣēpha below are identical except for the identities of the father and the purchaser.*)

**Ṣunaṣṣēpha I** – Son of Ajīgarta. Once, during a terrible famine, Ajīgarta sold his son to King Hariṣchandra to fend off starvation. Ṣunaṣṣēpha was tied to a post, to be used as the sacrificial animal at the Yāga being performed by Hariṣchandra. Ṣunaṣṣēpha kept praying to Lord Brahma. Brahma appeared, had Ṣunaṣṣēpha released and gave Hariṣchandra the full benefit of his Yāga without the sacrifice. Since the Dēvas helped get him released, he acquired the name Dēvarāta. Sage Viṣvāmitra was so pleased by Ṣunaṣṣēpha that he adopted him as his eldest son (*which did not sit well with his own hundred sons*).

Ajīgarta was turned into a fiend because of this sinful act. The servants of Yama were torturing him. Hearing this and feeling bad that his father's misfortune was due to him, Ṣunaṣṣēpha performed

Tapas* on the banks of the holy river Gautami, and caused his father to be released from his fiendish form. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Ṣunaṣṣēpha II** – Second son of Ruchika. Once, a king named Ambarīsha came to Ruchika and said to him "Someone stole my sacrificial animal and I am unable to find another one. I will give you a hundred thousand cows in exchange for one of your sons to be used as the sacrificial animal." Ruchika told him that he dearly loved his oldest son and could not give him up. Ruchika's wife said she is very fond of the youngest son and could not let him go. The middle son, named Ṣunaṣṣēpha told Ambarīsha that he is willing to go as the sacrificial animal. Ambarīsha gave Ruchika the cows he promised and took Ṣunaṣṣēpha. Sage Viṣvāmitra saw them on their way and taught Ṣunaṣṣēpha a Mantra (*powerful magical chant*). On reaching the place where the Yagjna was being performed, Ṣunaṣṣēpha was tied to a post. He then kept chanting the Mantra taught him by Viṣvāmitra. Indra* appeared and gave Ambarīsha the benefits of the Yagjna, making the sacrifice unnecessary, and had Ṣunaṣṣēpha released. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sunda** – Son of an Asura* named Nikumbha. Upasunda was his younger brother. The two brothers performed intense Tapas* in the Vindhya forest. When Lord Brahma appeared and asked them to choose boons, they asked for invisibility, all types of magic and immortality. Brahma granted the other boons, but denied them immortality. After that, they started harassing the Dēvas and Munis. Their victims went to Brahma and complained. Revealing that they cannot be killed by anyone else, He advised that a situation should be created in which they would kill each other. For this purpose,

He directed Viṣvakarma* to create a beautiful woman. Viṣvakarma created the Apsara* Tilōttama. Brahma directed her to cause enmity between Sunda and Upasunda, and their death. She went where they could see her. They both lusted after her. They asked her which of them she would marry. She told them that she would marry the one who stabs the other to death. Mad with desire for her, they stabbed each other and both died. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sundari I** – Daughter of Ṣuka. She married a king named Nīpu. Their son was Brahmadatta. *Bhāgavata*

**Sundari II** – Wife of Mālyavanta (*great-uncle of Rāvaṇa*). *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣunga** – Commander of the armies of King Bṛhadratha. He killed the king and took over his kingdom. His son was Agnimitra. *Bhāgavata*

**Sunīdha I** – Wife of Anga and mother of Vēna. When Vēna died from the anger of Munis, she died of extreme grief. *Bhāgavata*

**Sunīdha II** – Commander of the army of Ṣiṣupāla. He prepared to fight on behalf of Ṣiṣupāla when, during Dharmarāja's Rājasūya Yāga*, he challenged the choice of Lord Kṛshṇa as the person to receive the highest honour. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sunīti I** – Wife of Uttānapāda and mother of Dhruva. *Bhāgavata*

**Sunīti II** – Son of Vidūratha and brother of Sumati. An Asura* named Kujambha abducted his sister Mudāvati. He was sent by his father to find and kill the Asura and release his sister. He battled the Asura, was defeated, kept captive and later rescued by Vatsandhra. *Mārkaṇḍēya Purāṇa*

**Sūnṛta** – Daughter of Dharmadēva and wife of Uttānapāda. They had sons named Dhruva, Kīrtivanta, Āyushmanta, and Mahādyuti. *Hari Vamṣa*

**Ṣūnyabandhu** – Son of Tṛṇabindu. *Bhāgavata*

**Suparṇa** – Another name for Garutmanta*. His Parṇas (*Sanskrit for 'wings'*) were so strong that when Indra* hit him with his Vajrāyudha (*a thunderbolt, Indra's signature weapon, literally 'weapon of diamond'*), the only damage was that one feather fell off. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Supārṣva** – Son of Sampāti (*giant articulate bird; brother of Jaṭāyu*). Sampāti asked him to go on the search for Sīta. He agreed to go but Angada and the other Vānaras* told him they would themselves undertake the search. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Suprabha I** – Daughter of Vadānya and wife of Ashṭāvakra. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Suprabha II** – Daughter of a Vaiṣya *(merchant caste, below Brahmin or priestly and Kshatriya or warrior; the significance is that a man of any caste can marry a woman from the same or any lower caste*). A young Kshatriya man named Nābhāga loved her and married her in the Rākshasa manner (*by force*). A son, Bhananda, was born to her. Bhananda asked his mother what he should do in his life. She told him to tend to a cow. Bhananda went to the Himālaya mountain and performed Tapas*. He defeated Vasurāta, the son of his father's younger brother, and asked his father to rule the kingdom he had won. Nābhāga responded that he lost the eligibility to be a king when he married a Vaiṣya and became one himself. Suprabha then revealed that she

was not a Vaiṣya woman and that her father was a king named Sudēva. In her previous life, she was Kṛpāvati. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Suprabha III** – Son of King Durjaya and his wife Sukēṣi. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Supratīka I** – A king. He had two wives, Vidyutprabha and Kāntimati. Childless for a long time, he performed Tapas*. During his Tapas, Sage Durvāsa came to him. At the same time, Indra* came on his mount, the elephant Airāvata. Indra did not dismount the elephant on seeing Durvāsa. The Sage gave Indra a Ṣāpa* that he would lose his position. When Indra proposed that he would be born to the king's wife Vidyutprabha, Durvāsa gave his permission. A son named Durjaya was born to Supratīka and Vidyutprabha. Another son, Sudyumna, was born to Supratīka and his wife Kāntimati. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Supratīka II** – A Brahmin. When he asked his brother to give him his share of the inheritance from their father, the brother became angry, and gave him a Ṣāpa* that he would become an elephant. He reciprocated by giving his brother a counter-Ṣāpa that he would become a tortoise. When Garutmanta* was on his way to obtain Amṛtam* (*to release himself and his mother Vinata from bondage to his stepmother and her children*), he asked Sage Kaṣyapa for food. Kaṣyapa asked him to eat this elephant and tortoise. Garutmanta carried them away and ate them. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Supratīka III** – Bhagadatta's (*son of the Asura* Naraka, who was killed by Lord Kṛshṇa, accompanied by Satyabhāma during the battle*) elephant. Bhagadatta caused some destruction by driving

his elephant into the Pāṇḍava army. Arjuna killed the elephant. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Supushṭa** – Wife of Mahābhauma and mother of Ayutānīka. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣūra I** – Son of Kārtavīrya. Once, during his reign, while on a hunting trip, Ṣūra saw the Āṣram of Sage Jamadagni. Remembering that Jamadagni was the father of the Brahmin Paraṣurāma who had killed his father, he took advantage of Paraṣurāma's absence and killed Jamadagni. In retaliation, Paraṣurāma killed Ṣūra and his descendants. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Ṣūra II** – A king of the Yādava (*cowherds*) dynasty. Kunti's father. This was another name of Dēvāmīḍha, son of Hṛdi. He married Mārisha. His sons include Vasudēva and Dēvabhāga. *Bhāgavata*

**Surabhi I** – Viṣvakarma*, while performing Tapas*, created a girl who was a Kāmarūpiṇi (*had the ability to assume any form she chose*) who would enable him to perform Yāgas and attain Mukti*. Her name was Surabhi. He also created a Tējōmaya (*Sanskrit for' full of Tējas*' which has many meanings – powerful appears appropriate here*) man named Mārtānḍa. The Ēkādaṣa (*eleven*) Rudras were born to Mārtānḍa and Surabhi. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Surabhi II** – The cow of the Dēvas. Once, the Dēvas went to Lord Brahma and complained that they were hungry. Brahma gave them Amritam*. Surabhi was born at that time. Her offspring spread over all the worlds. She observed that even weak bulls were teamed up with strong bulls and when weak bulls could not carry the load placed on them, they were being hit with canes. Saddened by this ill-treatment of her male offspring, she sought Indra's*

help. Indra made it rain so that grass grew in plenty and allowed all the bulls to be strong. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣūrapadmāsura** – Asura* born to Surasa by Sage Kaṣyapa. He married Padmakōmala, daughter of Twashṭa Prajāpati*. He worshipped Ṣiva and was friends with Ṣiva and Vishṇu. His son was Bhānukōpa. Ṣūrapadmāsura prepared to go to war against Kumāraswāmi. His brother Simhavaktra advised against it because Kumāraswāmi was Lord Ṣiva's son. He rejected the advice and attacked Kumāraswāmi, and was killed by Him. *Skānda Purāṇa*

**Surasa I** – Daughter of an Asura* named Mahāsura. Surasa learnt techniques of magic and Māya (*illusion*) from Ṣukra (*the Guru of the Asuras*). The Guru directed her to create more Asuras. With her father's permission, she created a magical city and assuming the form of a beautiful young woman, lived there. Kaṣyapa Prajāpati* saw her, and fell in love with her. Sons named Ṣūrapadma, Tāraka, and Simhavaktra, and a daughter named Ajamukhi were born to Surasa and Kaṣyapa. *Skānda Purāṇa*

**Surasa II** – A female Nāga*. When Hanumān was crossing the ocean to reach Lanka* to find Sīta, the Dēvas, intending to test whether he was capable of the task, sent Surasa there. She blocked Hanumān's way. He increased his size to be bigger than her. She in turn increased her size. Hanumān then miniaturized himself and passed through her stomach, and emerged past her. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣūrasēna I** – Son of Kārtavīryārjuna (*one of the first kings killed by Paraṣurāma, sixth incarnation of Lord Vishṇu*). He escaped and survived the massacre of Kshatriyas (*princely caste, second to Brahmins in the hierarchy*) by Paraṣurāma. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣūrasēna II** – A king of the Chandra (*lunar; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Sūrya, or solar*) dynasty. He and his wife performed countless Vratas* hoping to become parents. After a long time, a serpent was born to them. They raised the serpent just like a child. The serpent had the power of speech, like humans. The serpent asked the parents to perform Upanayanam*. Ṣūrasēna did as requested. After a few years, the serpent pressured the parents to perform his marriage. Ṣūrasēna consulted his council of ministers. One of them, using a subterfuge in which a sword is used to represent an absent bridegroom in the marriage ceremony, brought back a princess, daughter of a king named Vijaya, as the serpent's bride. She and the serpent shared a bed. The serpent asked her "Why are you not frightened on seeing me?" She replied that one's husband, whatever he is like, is equal to God and that there is no reason to be afraid of God. The serpent then revealed to her that he had become a serpent due to a Ṣāpa*. The serpent and the princess then went and bathed together in the Gautami river where the serpent prayed to Lord Ṣiva, was released from the Ṣāpa. He regained his human form and went home with his wife. Ṣūrasēna was very happy at the turn of events. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Ṣūrasēna III** – A king who ruled the kingdoms of Māthura and Ṣūrasēnam, with the city of Mathura as the Capital. His son was Vasudēva (*father of Kṛshṇa*). *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Ṣūrasēna IV** – Son of Nitanta. He, along with Ṣrutasēna and his other brothers all married the same woman, Ajita. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣūrasēna V**– A king. Father of Kānchanamāla. *Skānda Purāṇa*

**Surāshṭra** – A king. He had three wives. Of the three, Utpalāvati was the Paṭṭa Mahishi (*principal queen*). All his wives died without bearing any children. Then, an enemy king named Vimartha defeated Surāshṭra in war, and drove him from his city. One day, while he was walking in the forest, there was torrential rain. The forest was totally dark. In the darkness, he fell into a stream and as he was swimming, his hand touched a deer. He grabbed the deer's tail and moved his hand to the root of it. The deer, a doe, speaking in a human voice, said "O! King! Why are you getting sexually aroused by touching me in an inappropriate spot?" Surprised to hear a doe speak, he inquired about her story. She said "I am Utpalāvati, the principal queen of King Surāshṭra. I got this form due to a Ṣāpa*." She became pregnant by his touch on her hind quarters. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Suratha I** – A king of Chaitra's dynasty during the Manvantara (*reign as Manu**) of Svārōchisha Manu. Driven out by enemies, he went to the forest and reached the Āṣram of a Muni named Sumēdha. The Muni gave him much knowledge. A merchant named Samādhi, driven away by his wife and children, also arrived at the same place. The king and the merchant became good friends. Sumēdha instructed them in the ritual of worshipping Dēvi (*the Supreme Being*). Suratha, by worshipping Dēvi with devotion, regained his kingdom. The merchant, choosing Mukti* instead of wealth, attained his wish. Suratha, in his next life, was born as Sāvarṇi and became Manu. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Suratha II** – King of the city of Ṣaktimati. When Lord Rāma was performing the Aṣvamēdha Yāga*, Suratha captured the sacrificial horse when it came to his city. Hanumān battled him to recover the

horse. Suratha held him captive as well. Finally, Rāma Himself came and released the horse and Hanumān. *Padma Purāṇa*

**Suratha III** – Son of King Sudēva. Younger brother of Ṣvēta. He ruled Vidarbha after Ṣvēta. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Suratha IV** – Second son of King Hamsadhwaja. He held truthfulness above all virtues. When Hamsadhwaja captured Dharmarāja's sacrificial horse during the Aṣvamēdha Yāga*, his older brother Sudhanva was killed in the battle, Suratha then entered the battle. He kept fighting even after he lost his chariot, and his arms were cut off. Finally, Arjuna severed his head. Lord Kṛshṇa, who knew that Suratha was devoted to truth, told Arjuna to salute his head with a Namaskāra*. He then summoned Garutmanta* to place the head in Prayāga (*present-day Allahabad; sacred confluence of three holy rivers, Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati*). Lord Ṣiva picked up the head and made it part of the garland around His neck. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Surēṇu** – Wife of Maya*. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Sūriṣarma** – Fourth son of a Brahmin named Ṣivadatta. One day, while he was in the forest gathering kindling for the sacred fire, he saw a tiger killing a deer. Terrified, he ran and fell down on some rocks. Thinking of the deer being killed by the tiger, he died. As a result, he was reborn as a deer. The deer killed by the tiger was reborn as a doe. The two became a couple. Once, as a hunter was about to kill these two, they managed to run away. Eventually, they stopped at a lake to slake their thirst. Paraṣurāma (*Lord Vishṇu's sixth Avatāra or incarnation*) also happened to be at the same lake at the time. Seeing him, the deer who was Sūriṣarma said to his

mate "We have no need to be afraid anymore. This man is Paraṣurāma and the other man with him is Akṛtavraṇa. Paraṣurāma is about to perform Tapas* to obtain the Kṛshṇa Kavacha (*Kavacha is Sanskrit for 'protective armor'*). But it is impossible to obtain it except by going to Agastya's Āṣram and listening to Ṣrī Kṛshṇa Stōtra (*Stōtra is Sanskrit for 'praise in song'*)." Paraṣurāma was amazed to hear these words being spoken by a deer and proceeded towards Agastya's Āṣram. The deer and doe followed him. On the way, they encountered the hunter who tried to kill them earlier. Paraṣurāma killed the hunter. The deer and the doe reached Agastya's Āṣram along with Paraṣurāma, listened to the Ṣrī Kṛshṇa Stōtra and attained Mukti* as a result. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Sūrmi** – Wife of Anuhlāda and mother of Bhāshkala and Mahisha. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Ṣūrpaṇakha** – Daughter of Viṣvavōbrahma and Kaikaṣi. Younger sister of Rāvaṇa. She was given in marriage to Vidyujjihva. When Rāvaṇa went to war against the Kālakēyas, Vidyujjihva accompanied him. During the war there, Vidyujjihva was accidentally killed by friendly fire from Rāvaṇa who mistook him for the enemy in the fog of war. When a devastated Ṣūrpaṇakha was mourning the death of her husband, Rāvaṇa offered sincere condolences and advised her to go to the Daṇḍaka forest (*covers parts of Chattisghar, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh states*) where her brothers Khara and Dūshaṇa, who live there, will provide her all the comforts of life. Accordingly, she went to the forest. She had a son named Jambukāsura. As he was performing Tapas* amidst thick bushes, Lakshmaṇa, while gathering fruit, struck

Jambukāsura with his sword, unaware of his presence. Jambukāsura died. As Ṣūrpaṇakha went about asking who killed her son, she was told that some humans killed the Asura*. Enraged to learn that mere humans had managed to kill her son, she came to Rāma's cottage intending to avenge her son's death by devouring the humans. When she saw Rāma, her heart was instantly filled with lust for Him, making her forget revenge for her son. She asked Rāma to make love to her. Rāma, saying He is with His wife, facetiously suggested to her that she try instead for His younger brother, Lakshmaṇa, who was single. Lakshmaṇa did not fulfill her desire either. Continuing to pine for Rāma and deciding that it was Sīta's presence that was preventing her from obtaining her wish, she tried to harass Sīta. Lakshmaṇa, ever vigilant in guarding his brother and sister-in-law from harm, caught hold of her and cut off her nose and ears. With injury added to rejection, she was grief-stricken. She let Khara and Dūshaṇa know of her misfortune and immediately went to Lanka*, and after relating the events that just happened to her, said "O! Brother! Do you see what some mere humans did to me, not even respecting the fact that I am your sister? Is not humiliating me the same as insulting you? There is a beautiful woman with the men who did this to me. You are the only one suitable to be her Lord. Her beauty is too great to describe. You should go and take that woman from the men. That is the only proper punishment for them." Thus, Ṣūrpaṇakha was the instigator for the abduction of Sīta. Rāvaṇa had no thought of getting involved with Rāma until Ṣūrpaṇakha goaded him. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Suruchi** – Wife of Uttānapāda and mother of Uttama. Stepmother

of Dhruva. Once, while her son was sitting on his father's lap, her stepson Dhruva came and was about to sit on his father's other thigh. Saying "You are unfit to sit with my son", she pushed him aside. Dhruva, in a fit of anger, left home, went to the forest and performed Tapas*. When her son Uttama, a bachelor, went to the forest to hunt, some Yakshas (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers*) killed him. *Bhāgavata*

**Sūrya** – (*the Sun God*) Son of Aditi and Kaṣyapa Prajāpati*. He rides a chariot and circles the Mēru mountain. The driver of his chariot is Anūra. He taught the Vēdas to Hanumān and Yāgjnavalkya.

Sūrya's wife was Sangjna, daughter of Viṣvakarma*. She had a son named Ṣrāddhadēva (*also known as Vaivasvata*) by him. Vaivasvata became the seventh Manu*. Unable to withstand Sūrya's brightness, she closed her eyes. Annoyed by her gesture, Sūrya said to her "Since you closed your eyes to me, a son will be born to you who will dispense blind justice to everyone." Accordingly, Yama (*the God of Death, who judges every soul on the death of the body it had occupied*) was born to her. When she did open her eyes, they fluttered wildly, trying to adjust to his brilliance. When Sūrya saw her eyes flutter, he told her a daughter would be born to her and would be restless. Thus it was that the river Yamuna (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*) was born to her. Still unable to withstand the heat emanating from her husband, she made her Chhāya (*shadow*) to look exactly like her, obtained a promise from Chhāya to not reveal her secret, and leaving Chhāya in her place, went to her parents' house. Sūrya did not realize for a very long time that the

woman living with him as his wife was not, in fact, Sangjna. After she had stayed in her father's house for a long time, Viṣvakarma told his daughter that it was improper for a married woman to stay in her father's house for so long. Sangjna left her father's house, but unwilling to go back to her husband, went to the Kuru country in the north, took the form of a mare and stayed there. Sūrya and Chhāya had sons named Ṣani (*the planet Saturn*) and Sāvarṇi (*who also will become a Manu, the eighth*) and a daughter named Tapati.

Yama complained to Sūrya that his stepmother was not treating him well. Sūrya, realizing that his real wife was in the form of a mare, took the form of a stallion and went to her. Sangjna recognised the horse as her husband. Their union, in the bodies of horses, resulted in the birth of the Aṣvins (*named Nāsatya and Dasra, twin physicians to the Dēvas, called Aṣvins because they were born to 'Aṣvas', Sanskrit for 'horses'*). Sometime later, Viṣvakarma, in order to reduce the brilliance of his son-in-law, ground him down by about ten percent. The filings from the grinding were used to make Vishṇu's Chakra*, Ṣiva's Triṣūla (*trident*), and the conchs (*each great warrior had a conch with a distinct sound, which they used to announce their arrival on the battlefield*) of the Vasus. Sangjna and Sūrya then reassumed their true forms and lived together.

When Amṛtam* was being distributed (*with the Dēvas in one row and the Asuras* in another row, facing each other; Vishṇu, in His female form as Jaganmōhini giving the Amṛtam only to the Dēvas while distracting the Asuras by flirting with them*), Sūrya noticed that an Asura, Rāhu was sitting in the Dēvas' row and

signaled the information to Vishṇu. Vishṇu hit Rāhu with His Chakra (*Rāhu having already consumed a little Amṛtam, did not die*). Rāhu retained a grudge against Sūrya for that reason and swallows him from time to time (*eclipses or Grahaṇa*).

There was also a Ṣāpa* from Sage Jamadagni that results in these occasional swallowings of Sūrya. Once, Jamadagni and his wife were engaged in lovemaking in broad daylight on the banks of the Narmada river. Sūrya asked the Sage "Is this proper behaviour for a Sage?" Jamadagni, angered by the interuption of his and his wife's romantic activity, gave Sūrya a Ṣāpa that clouds will obscure his brilliance and that Rāhu will swallow him occasionally. Sūrya, upset at being punished unfairly, gave Jamadagni a counter-Ṣāpa that he will be killed by a Kshatriya (*the warrior caste, of kings*). *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

Once, the Vindhya mountain (*in the Purāṇas, mountains are anthropomorphed into men*) was upset that Sūrya circled Mēru mountain but not himself and expanded his form to the point that Sūrya's path was blocked. Agastya then tricked Vindhya into contracting back to his original size.

Sūrya is one of the eyes of Lord Vishṇu. He is a friend of lotus flowers.

Once, Sūrya and Varuṇa were together when they saw the Apsara* Ūrvaṣi. Sūrya had a spontaneous ejaculation on seeing her beautiful body. Ūrvaṣi took his semen and put it in a Kumbha (*pot*). Then, Varuṇa also saw her with lust-filled eyes. She said to him "Sūrya desired me first. If you wish, satisfy your desire by looking at my body." Varuṇa also ejaculated and she put his semen in the same pot. Sūrya, feeling slighted by her action, gave her a

Ṣāpa that she would go to Bhū Lōka (*earth*) and be the wife of Purūrava. Sages Vasishṭha and Agastya were born from the semen in the pot. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

Once, Durvāsa went to the residence of King Kuntibhōja. The king's daughter Kunti attended to Durvāsa's needs. Pleased with her, he taught her a Mantra which when invoked, will bring to her any Dēva she thought of, who will give her a son instantly and without loss of her virginity. Kunti invoked the Mantra taught to her by Sage Durvāsa with Sūrya in mind. Once she saw him (*and realized the implications for an unmarried girl*), she was scared and asked him to go away. Sūrya replied that once summoned with the Mantra, he is unable to leave without giving her the result of using the Mantra. Assuring her that her virginity will not be violated, he had sex with her. A son, Karṇa, with body armor and earrings which were integral parts of his body, was born to Kunti instantly.

Sūrya, realizing that since his son will be invincible to anyone as long as he had the body armor and earrings with which he was born, and anticipating that Indra* will try to take them away (*to protect his son Arjuna*) by asking for them while disguised as a Brahmin, he warned Karṇa "A Brahmin will come and ask you to give him your body armor and earrings. Do not give them to him." Karṇa replied that he cannot decline any request from a Brahmin (*Karṇa acquired the title 'Dāna Karṇa' for his charitable nature; in particular, that he cannot disappoint a Brahmin*). Sūrya told him to ask for Indra's Ṣakti (*spiritual power*) before giving up the armor and earrings.

While the Pāṇḍavas were in exile in the forest, Dharmarāja

prayed to Sūrya. (*Many Brahmins, upset that the Pānḍavas were unfairly deprived of every thing and exiled, stayed with them. Dharmarāja was obliged to ensure that everyone with them were provided with sustenance, lacking resources other than what they could gather from the trees and plants*) Sūrya appeared and understanding his predicament, gave him an Akshayapātra (*a magical vessel; Sanskrit for 'pot that never empties'*) that would provide unlimited food of any kind they wished for. *Mahā Bhārata*

Once, Sūrya was directed by Lord Ṣiva to go to Kāṣi* and drive the king, Divōdās, out. Sūrya tried hard but failed. Unwilling to face Ṣiva again, he stayed in Kāṣi taking one of twelve different forms including Lōlārka and Udayārka (*Arka is one of the Sanskrit names of Sūrya*). (*Kāṣi Khanḍa is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Kāṣi Khanḍa*

**Sūryabhānu** – Gate-keeper of Kubēra (*God of Wealth*). Rāvaṇa once forced his way to Kubēra's presence after killing and cutting him into pieces. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Sūryadatta** – Younger brother of King Virāṭa. Drōṇa (*Guru who taught archery and other martial arts to the Kauravas and Pānḍavas*) killed him in the Mahā Bhārata war. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sūryāpīḍa** – Son of Janamējaya (*great-grandson of Arjuna*) and his wife Kāṣya. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sūryasāvarṇi** – Son of Sūrya (*the Sun God*) and Chhāya. He will be the eighth Manu* (*the current Manu, Vaivasvata is the seventh*). His sons including Nirmōha and Viraja will be kings. There will be three groups of Dēvas – Sutapas, Virajas and

Amitabhas. In his Manvantara (*reign as Manu*), Gālava, Dīptimanta, Paraṣurāma, Aṣvatthāma, Kṛpa, Vyāsa, and Ṛṣyaṣṛnga will be the Saptarshis*. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Sūryavarma** – King of the country of Trigarta. When the sacrificial horse from Dharmarāja's Aṣvamēdha Yāga* reached his country, he ignored Arjuna's advice to leave the horse alone. He and his brothers Kētuvarma and Dhṛtavarma were defeated in the ensuing war. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Suṣānti** – He was Indra* in the Manvantara (*reign as Manu**) of Uttama Manu. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Suṣarma I** – A Brahmin. Once, as he was preparing to perform a Yāga for the purpose of killing all the Asuras*, an Asura named Balāka abducted and hid his wife in order to render him ineligible to perform the Yāga. Suṣarma went to King Uttama and said "Someone stole my wife. Please find her and return her to me." The king suggested that he should find another more attractive woman, and marry her. Suṣarma replied that a husband is obligated to take care of his wife, regardless of her beauty, and that a man without a wife is not eligible to perform religious rituals. The king then set out to search for the Brahmin's wife (*kings were obligated to give or do whatever a Brahmin requests*). He discovered where she was being held, from a Muni who was a Trikālagjna (*Sanskrit for 'one who knows the three times, i.e., past, present, and future*), and brought her back to Suṣarma. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Suṣarma II** – King of the country of Trigarta. He had brothers named Satyavrata, Satyakarma and Satyavarṇa. He and his

brothers were friends and allies of Duryōdhana. Suspecting that the Pāṇḍavas might be staying incognito in the neighbouring kingdom of Virāṭa, he suggested to Duryōdhana to let him steal the cows of King Virāṭa, so that if the Pāṇḍavas were in fact there, they would come out to fight him and thus be exposed. Virāṭa had defeated him in the past (*actually, it was Virāṭa's brother-in-law, Simhabala who did; Suṣarma felt confident that the result would be different because Simhabala had been killed by unknown persons. The suspicion that the Pāṇḍavas were hiding there was because it would have taken someone with the strength of Bhīma to kill Simhabala*). Suṣarma, hoping to avenge his past defeat, went with his army to steal Virāṭa's cows. Suṣarma defeated Virāṭa and held him captive in his chariot. Dharmarāja sent Bhīma (*they were in disguise, still incognito*) to release Virāṭa. Bhīma defeated Suṣarma and brought him as a captive to Dharmarāja. But Dharmarāja let Suṣarma go free. Arjuna killed Suṣarma in the Mahā Bhārata war. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Suṣarma III** – Son of Karṇa (*son of Kunti, mother of the Pāṇḍavas, by Sūrya, the Sun God, before her marriage*). He was killed in the Mahā Bhārata war by Nakula. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Suṣarma IV** – A king of the dynasty of Kaṇva. One of his minions from Andhra named Vṛshala, killed him and took over his kingdom. *Bhāgavata*

**Sushēṇa I** – One of the sons of Jamadagni. When his father ordered him to kill his mother, he refused and was given a Ṣāpa*. But on Paraṣurāma's request, Jamadagni released him from the Ṣāpa. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sushēṇa II** – A Vānara* king. Father of Tāra (*wife of brothers Vāli and Sugrīva at different times*). During the search for Sīta, he went towards the west. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣushka** – A Muni. He went to Paraṣurāma (*sixth incarnation of Lord Vishṇu*) as he was performing Tapas* on the Mahēndra mountain and said to him "Samudra flooded the holy site of Gōkarṇa. Please come and save the Tīrtha*. Even though you are in Tapas, it is permissible for you to take up arms to fight evil. No sin will accrue to you as a result." *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Suṣīla** – Beautiful daughter of a Brahmin named Hariswāmi, who lived in the city of Kāṣi*. She constantly worshipped Lord Ṣiva. Falling in love with her beauty, a Vidyādhara (*semi-divine beings with special magical powers*) abducted her and held her on the Malaya mountain. An Asura* named Vidyunmāli, who also fell in love with her, attacked the Vidyādhara. They killed each other. Considering that the one who embraced her had become her husband and he (*the Vidyādhara*) is dead, she built a fire and immolated herself, wishing that he should be her husband in future lives. Suṣīla was born in the next life as Kaḷāvati. The Vidyādhara was reborn as King Malayakētu. Malayakētu married Kaḷāvati. She retained knowledge of her previous life. (*Kāṣi Khanḍa is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**). *Kāṣi Khanḍa*

**Suṣōbhana** – Daughter of a frog (*articulate*) king named Āyu. She would take human female form and seduce kings. A king named Parīkshit (*different from Arjuna's grandson*) who was hunting in the forest, saw her, fell in love with her and expressed his desire to her. She told him she would marry him if he promised

to never dip her in water. Suṣōbhana and Parīkshit got married. One day, forgetting his promise to her, he took her with him to a lake and made her take a dip in the water with him. She disappeared immediately. Suspecting that the frogs in the lake had killed her, he started killing frogs on sight. Āyu, taking the form of a Brahmin (*because a king cannot deny any request from a Brahmin*), went to Parīkshit and requested him to stop the genocide against frogs. He revealed that he is the king of frogs, and that Parīkshit's wife was his daughter. When the king asked him to bring his wife back to him, Āyu did so, and saying she had deceived many kings, he gave his daughter a Ṣāpa* that her sons will behave deceitfully. Parīkshit welcomed her back and sons named Ṣala, Dala and Nala (*different from Damayanti's husband*) were born to them. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Suṣrava** – Sister of Gāndhāri. Dhṛtarāshṭra married her as well. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Suṣravasa** – Wife of Jayatsēna and mother of Avāchīna. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Sūta** – A Muni, son of Rōmaharshaṇa. Sūta was also known as Ugraṣravas. He narrated all the Purāṇas to Ṣaunaka and other Munis. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa; Bhāgavata*

One day, while Sūta was narrating the Purāṇas, Balarāma (*Lord Kṛshṇa's older brother*) came to the forest. Even after seeing him, Sūta did not rise to show respect. This behaviour angered Balarāma and he killed Sūta. When all the Munis begged him, Balarāma revived Sūta. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Sutapa I** – A Prajāpati* during the Manvantara of Swāyambhu

Manu*. His wife was Pṛṣni. The couple performed Tapas* directed towards Lord Vishṇu for many years. When He appeared, they requested, instead of Mukti*, that He be born as their son. Accordingly, he took birth as Kaṣyapa (*father of Vāmana, Lord Vishṇu's fifth incarnation*) and Vasudēva (*father of Kṛshṇa, the ninth incarnation*). *Bhāgavata*

**Sutapa II** – One of the sons of Sage Vasishṭha. He was one of the Saptarshis* in the epoch of Uttama Manu*. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Sutapa III** – A Brahmin. He is of the Gōtra (*lineage*) of Bharadvāja. Once, while his wife was on a pilgrimage, one of the Aṣvins (*son of Sūrya the Sun God*) was overcome by lust for her, and raped her. Ashamed, she returned to her husband with the son born as a result of the rape. Sutapa abandoned her and gave the Aṣvins a Ṣāpa* that they will not be eligible for a share of the Havya*. His wife became the Gōdāvari river (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*). Sutapa went away to perform Tapas*. He heard Ākāṣavāṇi* say that he should take his wife back for some time and beget offspring. A son named Kaḷyāṇamitra was born to them. Sūrya then came to Sutapa and prayed for forgiveness for his son's sin and release from the Ṣāpa. Sutapa gave the Aṣvins a boon that they are eligible to receive Havya. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Sutapa IV** – Son of Nivṛtachakshu. Once, falling in love with a doe, Sutapa assumed the form of a deer and was having sex with the doe. A woman named Utpalāvati, daughter of Dhṛḍhadhanva, scared the doe, who then ran away. The male deer, assumed his original form of Sutapa and said to her, "you interfered with my

pleasure; marry me or I will give you a Ṣāpa*." When she refused to marry him, he gave her a Ṣāpa that she would become a doe. Saddened, she said to him, "Sir, do you not know? A girl has to be given in marriage by her parents. How can she give herself? Please provide me release from the Ṣāpa!" Sutapa told her "You will become a doe not in this life but in a future one. You will have knowledge of the previous life and a great Muni named Lōla will be in your womb. You will have human speech and when you give birth, you will be released from the Ṣāpa." *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Sutapa V** – Son of King Hōma. *Bhāgavata*

**Sutējas** – One of the sons of Sage Vasishṭha. He was one of the Saptarshis* in the epoch of Uttama Manu*. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Sutīkshṇa** – A Muni who performed Tapas* in the Danḍaka forest (*covers parts of Chattisghar, Odesha, and Andhra Pradesh states*). Lord Rāma, while travelling through this forest during His fourteen-year exile, visited him and sought his recommendation on a suitable place for Himself, Sīta and Lakshmaṇa to stay in the forest. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Suvarchala** – Wife of Paramēshṭhi and mother of Pratīha. *Bhāgavata*

**Suvarṇa I** – Daughter of Agni (*the God of Fire*). Once, Agni was forced to receive Lord Ṣiva's semen. He was able to transfer some of it to his wife Swāhā Dēvi. Born of the semen of Agni and Ṣiva, this girl became an adulteress. By Ṣiva's grace, she later became a virtuous woman. *Skānda Purāṇa*

**Suvarṇa II** – Wife of Hanumān. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Suvarṇa III** – Wife of Suhōtra and mother of Hasti. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Suvarṇa IV** – Son of Gāndhāri and Dhṛtarāshṭra. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Suvarṇamukhi** – A river. It is near the Tīrtha*, Ṣrī Kāḷahasti. Sage Agastya came to visit Ṣrī Kāḷahasti (*regarded as the Kāṣi*, or place dear to Ṣiva, of southern India*), and finding no river nearby, prayed to Lord Ṣiva and brought a branch of Ganga (*flowing in heaven, or Ākāṣa*) down to earth. Because the river came down looking golden, it was named Suvarṇamukhi (*Suvarṇa is one of many Sanskrit words for 'gold'*). (*Ṣrī Kāḷahasti Māhātmyam is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Ṣrī Kāḷahasti Māhātmyam*

**Suvarṇashṭhīvi** – Son of King Sṛnjaya. He was born as the result of a boon from Sage Nārada. His father wished that a son should be born whose Nishṭhīvana (*excretions including urine, feces, tears, saliva, and sweat*) should be made of gold and Nārada granted the wish. Parvata (*Nārada's nephew*) who was also present at the time, predicted that the boy will not live long. Because his Nishṭhīvana were all gold, he was given the name Suvarṇashṭhīvi. Some thieves, learning of this unusual attribute of the boy, killed him and examined the body, expecting that his body must be made of gold inside. As a consequence of their sins, they all died, killing each other. Sṛnjaya 'thought of'* Nārada. Nārada went to Yama Lōka (*the world of Yama, the God of Death*) and brought the boy back alive to Sṛnjaya.

On another occasion, Indra*, concerned that this boy might become more powerful than himself, said to his Vajrāyudha (*a thunderbolt, Indra's signature weapon, literally 'weapon of*

*diamond'*) "Assume the form of a tiger and kill Suvarṇashṭhīvi." While Sṛnjaya was strolling on the banks of river Ganga with his wife and children, the tiger killed Suvarṇashṭhīvi. Sṛnjaya again 'thought of' Nārada, who again brought him back to life. Suvarṇashṭhīvi ruled his kingdom for a long time. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Suvēga** – Son of King Yauvanāṣva of the city of Bhadrāvati. When Bhīma (*younger brother of Dharmarāja and older brother of Arjuna*) came to take their horse for his brother's Aṣvamēdha Yāga*, Yauvanāṣva fought him, but was knocked unconscious. Suvēga then engaged Bhīma in a fight using clubs. They both hit each other and fell down unconscious. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Suyagjna I** – Lord Vishṇu Himself was born with this name to the Prajāpati* Ruchi and his wife Ākūti. He begat a class of Dēvas named Suyamas. He removed the afflictions of all the worlds. *Bhāgavata*

**Suyagjna II** – King of country named Uṣīnara. When he was killed in war, his wives were weeping beside the body. Yama (*the God of Death*) came in the form of a boy and explained the cycle of birth and death to them. *Bhāgavata*

**Suyaṣa I** – Wife of Nandi (*articulate bull who is both Lord Ṣiva's transport and chief of guards*). *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Suyaṣa II** – Wife of Parīkshit (*different from Arjuna's grandson*), who was the son of Anaṣva. Their son was Bhīmasēna (*not the Pānḍava of the same name*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Suyaṣas** – Son of King Aṣōka (*not the latter-day emperor who promoted Buddhism*). His son was Samyata. *Bhāgavata*

**Ṣvana** – Wife of Prajāpati and mother of Anila. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣvaphalka** – Son of Pṛṣni, who was the son of Anamitra. His brother was Chitraka.

Once, the wife of the king of Kāṣi* was pregnant, with her gestation lasting more than twelve years. The Brahmins in his Sabha (*court*) advised that she will probably give birth if Ṣvaphalka came to the city. Ṣvaphalka was then brought to Kāṣi. The king, having learnt that the baby in his wife's womb was female, said to her "Girl! Stop hurting your mother and be born". Speaking from the womb, the baby answered "I will come out if you promise to give gifts of cows to Brahmins every day." The king agreed and the girl emerged from the womb. She was named Gāndini. She was given in marriage to Ṣvaphalka. *Hari Vamṣa*

Once, a severe drought occurred in the city of Kāṣi. The Brahmins in his Sabha advised the king that it would rain if Ṣvaphalka was brought to the city. The king invited Ṣvaphalka, received him with honour and respect and gave him his daughter Gāndini in marriage. Kāṣi received plenty of rain. Akrūra was one of the sons of Ṣvaphalka. Ṣvaphalka had eleven other sons and a daughter named Suchāru. *Bhāgavata*

**Svarbhānavi** – Wife of Āyu. Nahusha, Gaya, Āsēnasa, and Vṛddhaṣarma were their sons. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Svarōchi** – Son of Varūdhini by the Gandharva* who came disguised as Pravarākhya with whom she was in love. He became the king of the tribal people of the forest. One day, while returning after a hunt, he came across a young woman named Manōrama, crying because she was being chased by an Asura*. Svarōchi

fought the Asura and rescued the woman. The Asura whom Svarōchi battled was then released from a Ṣāpa*, and assuming his original form, told Svarōchi that he was Manōrama's father and gave her in marriage to Svarōchi. As Svarōchi prepared to enjoy his first night with his bride, she tearfully told Svarōchi that she cannot enjoy conjugal pleasures while her dear friends Vibhāvari and Kaḷāvati were suffering from illness and begged him to cure them. Svarōchi learned the nature of their problem, remedied it and married them. Vibhāvari (*daughter of a Vidyādhara*) and Kaḷāvati (*daughter of a Yaksha*), both taught their husband useful special skills. Svarōchi had a son Vijaya by Manōrama, a son Mērunandana by Vibhāvari, and a son Vibhāvasa by Kaḷāvati. Sometime later, as he was about to shoot a wild boar, a (*articulate*) doe asked him to shoot her. She said she was in love with him, and asked him to embrace her. Recovering from surprise at the doe's request, he did so. She turned into a divine woman and told him that she is the Vana Dēvata (*forest Goddess*), that she was sent by the Dēvas, and that his son by her would become a Manu*. Their son was Svārochisha Manu. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Svārōchisha** – Son of Svarōchi by the Vana Dēvata (*forest Goddess*). He performed Tapas* for a very long time. Lord Vishṇu appeared to him and gave him the boon that he will be the second Manu*. During his Manvantara, Vipaṣchita was Indra*. Ūrja, Stambha, Prāṇa, Dattōḷi, Ṛshabha, Nīvāra, and Arivanta were the Saptarshis*. His sons including Chaitra, Rōchishmata, and Kimpurusha were kings. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa; Bhāgavata*

**Svāyambhu** – Son of Lord Brahma. He was the first Manu*. Priyavrata and Uttānapāda were his sons. Sūti (*also known as*

*Ākūti*), Prasūti, and Dēvahūti were his daughters. *Matsya Purāṇa; Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

Svāyambhu gave his daughter Ākūti in marriage to Ruchi Prajāpati*. In time, Svāyambhu and his wife Ṣatarūpa gave up family life and were in Tapōvana* performing Tapas* on the banks of the Sunanda river when some Asuras* tried to kill and eat them. Yagjna, Lord Vishṇu born as the son of Svāyambhu's daughter Ākūti, killed the Asuras. In addition to Yagjna, Vishṇu also took birth as Kapila during the Manvantara (*reign as Manu*) of Svāyambhu. Yagjna and Kapila spread Dharma Gjnāna (*knowledge of the righteous life*) throughout the world. *Bhāgavata*

**Svayamprabha** – Daughter of Mērusāvarṇi, a Manu*. Friend and companion of Hēma (*wife of Maya**). She and her friend were living in a beautiful mansion inside a cave built by Maya. Hanumān and the other Vānaras*, exhausted and thirsty in their search for Sīta, entered the cave. They saw Svayamprabha there, enquired regarding her history, and rested there. Concerned that the deadline by their King Sugrīva for finding Sīta was approaching, they said to her that they lacked the strength to exit the cave. She asked them to close their eyes for a moment. By the time they opened their eyes, they found themselves in Prasvaraṇa (*a hill under which Rāma and Lakshmaṇa took shelter from the rain*). *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣvēta I** – A king in the Kṛta Yuga (*epoch, the first of four in a cycle, followed by Trēta, Dwāpara and Kali*). A Muni named Kapāla Gautama came to him and told him that his son had died, and that even in that epoch, untimely deaths like that happened some time. He brought the corpse of his son to him. Ṣvēta vowed

that he would bring his son back to life. He prayed to Ṣiva, requested Ṣiva to revive the boy and succeeded. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Ṣvēta II** – An attendant of Kubēra (*the God of Wealth*) and guardian of his wealth. During the Rāmāyaṇa war, Indrajit (*son of Rāvaṇa*) was using Asura* magic to become invisible and raining arrows on Rāma and Lakshmaṇa. On Kubēra's direction, Ṣvēta brought divine water and gave it to Rāma. When Rāma washed His eyes with the water, He was able to break the Asura's Māya and see every thing. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣvēta III** – Son of Sudēva, king of Vidarbha. After ruling for a long time, he handed over the kingdom to his half-brother Suratha, went to Tapōvana* and performed Tapas* for one thousand years. He attained divinity and was traveling in a flying vehicle. Divine damsels served him hand and foot. In spite of such perquisites, he suffered from constant hunger. Saddened by this, he went to Lord Brahma and asked Him "I have performed Tapas for a thousand years. I have attained divinity. Why am I suffering with hunger?" Brahma told him "You have performed Tapas. However, you never gave anyone a meal. You never gave anyone even a glass of water to slake his thirst. That is what is causing your suffering. Keep eating the carcass you left. Each day it will become whole again. Keep doing this until Sage Agastya comes and speaks with you. After that, your suffering will stop." Accordingly, Ṣvēta flew his vehicle to where his body was and started to cut it up and eat it. One day, Sage Agastya, strolling through the forest, came to a lake and saw a corpse on the shore. He was surprised to see how clean and unspoiled it was. Just then, a divine being arrived there on a

flying vehicle and started to cut it up and eat it. An amazed Agastya asked him "You are a divine being. Why are you eating a corpse?" Ṣvēta narrated his story to him, and realizing the person who addressed him was Sage Agastya, gave him a diamond and went on his way. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ṣvēta IV** – Another name of Dhṛshṭadyumna (*son of King Drupada*). He got the name because he was of the Ṣvēta dynasty. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣvētakarṇa** – A king. Son of Satyakarṇa and husband of Mālini (*also known as Mānini*). In his old age, he handed the kingdom over to his ministers and went to the forest. His wife, who was pregnant at the time, accompanied him to the forest. A son, Ajapārṣva was born to them. *Hari Vamṣa*

**Ṣvētakētu** – Son of Uddālaka and grandson of Aruṇa. He had a good education. Once, Ṣvētakētu went to the Sabha (*court*) of Pravāhaṇa, a king of the Pānchāla dynasty. Ṣvētakētu thought of himself as a scholar. Wanting to disabuse him of his notion, the king asked a series of questions: "Where do those who have only done good deeds and died, go from this world? By what means will those who went to the afterlife to enjoy their rewards return here? Since those going to the afterlife having done good deeds (*only*), and those who have performed devoted worship initially take the same route, where do they change their paths? With people leaving constantly for the afterlife, why do not the worlds they go to become overpopulated?" Unable to answer any of these questions, Ṣvētakētu went to his father and said to him: "You said you educated me. I was unable to answer any of these questions.

Why did you not teach me these things?" The father told him that he would have taught those things if he had known them himself, and went to the king. The king offered him wealth. Uddālaka refused wealth and requested the king to teach him the answers to the questions the king had asked his son. He learnt these matters from the king.

Ṣvētakētu was very proud that he had learnt all knowledge from his Guru. One day, Uddālaka summoned him and asked "What is the object which if understood, gives you knowledge of every thing? Did your Guru teach this?" Ṣvētakētu admitted his Guru did not teach him that. His father taught him the nature of the Brahma* (*Supreme Being*). *Chāndōgya Upanishad*

Ashṭāvakra was his cousin (*son of his paternal aunt*). Once, a guest in their house lusted for Ṣvētakētu's mother. Ṣvētakētu proclaimed that the guest's desire violates Dharma (*righteous path*) and declared it a sin for a married person to have sex with someone other than his or her spouse. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣvētaki** – A Rājarshi (*royal Sage*). He wanted to perform a Sattra Yāga continuously for one hundred years. When he consulted the Ṛtvijas*, they all told him they were incapable of enduring such an arduous task and that only Ṣiva could endure such a Yāga. He then performed Tapas* directed towards Ṣiva. When Ṣiva appeared. Ṣvētaki requested Him to be the Ṛtvija for his Yāga. Ṣiva said "None but a Brahmin is eligible to act as a Ṛtvija. Therefore, you should try and propitiate Agni by continually feeding Ghee (*clarified butter*) to him." Ṣvētaki did as He advised and Ṣiva then sent Sage Durvāsa as the Ṛtvija. It was this hundred-year long Yāga that caused Agni to lose his brilliance, the cure for which was

to eat (*burn*) the Khāṇḍava forest. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Swāhā I** – Daughter of Daksha Prajāpati*. Wife of Agni (*the God of Fire*). When Sages perform Hōmas* at new moon, their wives assist them doing necessary chores. Agni would feel sexual desire for the women. In frustration, Agni went away to the forest, sad and dejected. Agni's wife Swāhā, realizing this, took the form of Angirasa's wife Ṣiva and went to Agni. She said to him, "I am the wife of a Sage and I desire you, please have sex with me". Agni happily obliged. She put his semen in a golden pot on Ṣvēta (*white*) mountain. She returned to Agni several times, each time in the guise of a different Sage's wife, had sex and put the semen in golden pots. She did this disguised as the wife of six of the seven Sages (*except as Arundhati*). Kumāraswāmi (*also known as Shaṇmukha, Kārtikēya or Muruga*) was born from this semen. The wives of the Munis were suspected of adultery because Swāhā impersonated them and made love to Agni. The Munis abandoned their wives. Then Swāhā went to the Munis and told them the truth. *Mahā Bhārata*

A girl emerged from the left side of Agni (*the God of Fire*). She was Swāhā; she became Agni's wife. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Swāhā II** – Daughter of Rasa (*son of Krōdha, of the dynasty of Agni*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ṣyamantaka** – A Maṇi (*diamond*). Sūrya (*the Sun God*) gave this Maṇi to Satrājit, who had prayed to him with devotion. This very special Maṇi produces large quantities of gold for its owner every day. Satrājit's brother, Prasēna asked for it and Satrājit gave it to him.

Earlier, Kṛshṇa requested Satrājit to give the Maṇi to Him but Satrājit refused. One day, as Prasēna was walking in the forest holding the big Maṇi in his hand, a lion, attracted by the glittering jewel, killed him and grabbed the Ṣyamantaka. Jāmbavanta (*a powerful, articulate bear*) killed the lion, took the Maṇi and gave it to his daughter Jāmbavati.

An allegation that Kṛshṇa killed Prasēna for the Maṇi was raised. Kṛshṇa, in order to disprove the allegation, set out to find the Maṇi. In the forest, He found the bodies of Prasēna and the lion. Tracking footprints leading away from the scene, he found a young girl, Jāmbavati, playing with the Maṇi. A fight ensued between Kṛshṇa and Jāmbavanta over the Maṇi. Jāmbavanta was duly defeated and presented the Maṇi, and his daughter (*becomes one of Kṛshṇa's eight wives*) to Kṛshṇa. Kṛshṇa then returned the Maṇi to Satrājit.

Later, a king named Ṣatadhanva asked Satrājit for the Maṇi and when Satrājit refused, Ṣatadhanva killed him. Kṛshṇa subsequently fought and killed Ṣatadhanva. Assuming Kṛshṇa had the Maṇi, Balarāma (*Kṛshṇa's older brother*) once asked to see it. The Maṇi, actually, was not with Kṛshṇa. It was with Ṣatadhanva's son Bhōja. Kṛshṇa said "I do not have the Maṇi. Ṣatadhanva's son has it." Upset in his mistaken belief that Kṛshṇa lied and deceived him, Balarāma went to Mithila.

Later, Akrūra obtained the Maṇi from Bhōja and finally gave it to Kṛshṇa. Ṣyamantaka Maṇi thus caused several deaths, quarrels and suspicions. *Bhāgavata; Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Ṣyēni** – Wife of Anūra and mother of Sampāti and Jaṭāyu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Syūmaraṣmi** – A Brahmin. Once, Sage Kapila said to a cow "Be the embodiment of the Vēdas." Assuming that he was denigrating the Vēdas, Syūmaraṣmi entered the body of the cow and started an argument with Kapila. From the cow, he said "The Gṛhasta (*second of the four stages of a Brahmin's life – Bālya, childhood upto attaining majority; Gṛhasta, meaning 'householder', or family man; Vānaprastha, hermit or partial renunciation of world; and Sanyāsa, total renunciation*) stage supports all the other stages (*prime of life when a responsible person takes care of the young and the old*), and it is appropriate for the Gṛhastu to perform Yāgas and other religious rituals as ordained by the Vēdas. Are the Vēdas, therefore, not due your respect?" Kapila then clarified why he said what he did and taught Syūmaraṣmi who was in the cow, the truth about the Vēdas. Syūmaraṣmi came out of the cow, identified himself and said "I will be your disciple. Please teach me Dharma (*the righteous path*)." *Mahā Bhārata*

# – ṬA –

**Taksha I** – Son of Lord Rāma's younger brother, Bharata. Bharata killed the sons of a Gandharva* and made Taksha the ruler of their realm. His capital city was named Takshaṣila (*literally, Taksha's rock. Reputed to be the site of a prominent ancient University in what is now Afghanistan*). *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Taksha II** – Son of the Asura* Vṛtra. *Bhāgavata*

**Takshaka** – Son of Kadruva. A Nāga*. Once, while carrying the earrings Udanka obtained from Queen Paushya, he put them on the shore of a lake and was performing his morning ablutions. Takshaka went there as a naked human, and after stealing the earrings, assumed his real serpent form and reached Nāga Lōka. Udanka chased him into Nāga Lōka and proceeded to cause destructive havoc. Takshaka was terrified and brought the earrings he stole and returned them to Udanka. It was to avenge Takshaka's crime that Udanka encouraged Emperor Janamējaya (*Arjuna's great-grandson*) to perform a Sarpa Yāga (*serpent sacrifice*).

A Muni named Ṣṛngi had given Parīkshit (*grandson of Arjuna*) a Ṣāpa* that he would die from Takshaka's venom. Takshaka disguised himself as a Brahmin, and accompanied by other Nāga youth also disguised as Brahmins, was on his way to the special palace Parīkshit had built for himself (*supposed to be inaccessible to Takshaka*). On the way, he saw another Brahmin and asked him,

"Who are you? Where are you going?" The Brahmin said "My name is Kaṣyapa, I know how to save people bitten by snakes. I have heard that Takshaka was going to bite Emperor Parīkshit today. I hope to save him and earn a handsome reward". Takshaka said, "I am Takshaka. Who can revive someone bitten by me? Why exert yourself unnecessarily? Go back home." An argument ensued and Takshaka said, "I will burn this tree with my venom. Revive it if you can." So saying, he bit a nearby tree. The tree and all living things on it burned to ashes. Kaṣyapa used his skills and turned the ashes back into the tree as it had been and also revived all the creatures that lived on it. Concerned that this Brahmin will defeat his purpose, Takshaka gave the Brahmin as much money as he wanted and persuaded him to go back. Then Takshaka turned himself into a very small shape and entered one of the lemons his companions were bringing to the palace. The fake Brahmins gained entry to Parīkshit's palace and as the emperor was smelling the lemons presented to him by the fake Brahmins, Takshaka emerged from one of the lemons and bit him.

When other serpents were being thrown into the fire during Emperor Janamējaya's Sarpa Yāga, Takshaka tried to escape death by coiling himself around Indra's* throne. As he was falling to earth due to the spiritual power of the Mantras of the Brahmins, he encountered Āstīka. Āstīka informed him that he was able to persuade Janamējaya to stop the Yāga and that the danger had passed. Takshaka then went home. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Tāḷajangha** – Grandson of Kārtavīrya. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Tāḷakētu** – An Asura*. Younger brother of Pātāḷakētu. A king named Kuvalayāṣva had killed his older brother. Tāḷakētu planned

to exact revenge for his brother's death by deceiving Kuvalayāṣva. One day, as Kuvalayāṣva was walking in the forest, Tāḷakētu assumed the form of a Muni, and said to Kuvalayāṣva, "I am planning to perform a Yāga. Give me some material help." Kuvalayāṣva gave him his necklace. After he received the necklace, Tāḷakētu requested Kuvalayāṣva to look after his Āṣram while he cleanses himself in the river nearby. Trusting him, Kuvalayāṣva sat where Tāḷakētu indicated. Meanwhile, Tāḷakētu dove into the river, and using his magical power, instantly reached Kuvalayāṣva's city. He announced that Kuvalayāṣva had been killed by Asuras and showed the necklace as evidence. The people believed that Kuvalayāṣva had died. Unable to bear the grief of her husband's death, Kuvalayāṣva's wife passed away. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Tāmasa** – A Manu*. A woman named Utpalāvati, due to a Ṣāpa* she had received, was in the form of a doe. A king named Surāshṭra touched the root of her tail and the doe became pregnant as a result. A Sage named Lōla entered her womb. The doe gave birth at a time when the whole world was covered by Tamas (*Sanskrit for darkness*). Many Munis came to see her new-born son and named him Tāmasa. He was raised by his father. Tāmasa, having heard from his father the story of his birth as well as how his father was driven from his kingdom by enemies, defeated the enemy kings and regained the kingdom. Tāmasa had sons named Jānujangha, Ṣānti, Nara, Prasthala, Dṛḍha, and Kṛtabandhu. Tāmasa became the fourth Manu. During his Manvantara (*reign as Manu*), Ṣibi (*also known as Triṣikha*) was Indra*. *Bhāgavata*

The Saptarshis* included Jyōtirdhāma, Pṛthu, Gāvya, and

Chaitra.

Gajēndra Mōksha, the heroic event in which an elephant that was a devotee of Lord Vishṇu was saved from a crocodile by Lord Vishṇu, occurred during this Manvantara. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Tamasā River** – Sage Vālmīki's Āṣram was on the banks of this river. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Tāmiṣra** – A Naraka (*One of twenty eight hells, each with a different kind of punishment depending on the sin committed*). *Dēvī Bhāgavata; Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Tāmra I** – Daughter of Daksha Prajāpati* and wife of Sage Kaṣyapa. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Tāmra II**– An Asura*, friend of Mahishāsura. He battled Dēvi (*the Supreme Being*) and was killed. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Tāmrachūḍa** – A Mātrugaṇa (*female follower*) of Kumāraswāmi (*Lord Ṣiva's son*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Tāmradhwaja** – Son of Mayūradhwaja, ruler of Maṇipura. Kṛshṇa and Arjuna fought him when he attempted to capture the sacrificial horse of Dharmarāja, but were defeated by him. He presented the horse he had captured to his father. Kṛshṇa and Arjuna approached King Mayūradhwaja disguised as Brahmins and requested him to cut a piece of his flesh and give it to them (*A king could not deny a Brahmin any thing the Brahmin requests*). He offered them his whole body. Tāmradhwaja started to cut his father's body. Lord Kṛshṇa revealed his true form. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Tāmraparṇi** – A river that flows near Gōkarṇa Tīrtha*. The

Dēvas once performed Tapas* on the banks of this river. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Tānḍra tree** – A berry tree known as Vibhātaka (*its berries are used as dice*). Kali (*the personification of Kali Yuga, in which Dharma or righteousness limps along on a single foot*) left Nala's body, and entered a Tānḍra tree, which became infamous as a result. It is this tree of which Ṛtuparṇa, using a special science called Aksha Vidya, was able to find the number of leaves and nuts without counting them. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Tantrīpāla** – Name used by Sahadēva while he and the other Pānḍavas were incognito. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Tapati** – Daughter of Sūrya (*the Sun God*). A king named Samvaraṇa, who happened to see her in the forest, fell in love with her and asked her to marry him in the Gāndharva* manner. She told him she could not accede to his request and disappeared. Samvaraṇa performed Tapas* directed towards Sūrya, obtained his permission and married her. (*She was the mother of Kuru, the ancestor of the Kauravas and Pānḍavas*) *Mahā Bhārata*

**Tāra I** – Wife of Bṛhaspati (*the Dēvas' Guru*). Chandra (*the Moon God*) used to visit Bṛhaspati (*in other versions, Chandra lived for some time in Bṛhaspati's residence, as his disciple*) often. Tāra fell in love with Chandra, attracted by his good looks, and when her elderly husband was not home, made love to Chandra and became pregnant. Chandra took her to his home. A war ensued between Chandra and Bṛhaspati. The Asuras* were about to join the battle on Chandra's side. Lord Brahma and the Dēvas intervened to prevent the catastrophe (*of a divisive struggle among the Dēvas,*

*being exploited by the Asuras for their own benefit*). In the meantime, Tāra gave birth to a son named Budha*. Chandra and Bṛhaspati each claimed Budha as his son. Brahma, unable to determine the boy's paternity, asked Tāra. She announced that Budha was Chandra's son. Brahma decided that Budha belonged to Chandra and Tāra to Bṛhaspati. *Bhāgavata*

**Tāra II** – Father of Tāra, female Vānara*. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Tāra III** – Wife of Vāli (*king of Vānaras*). Her father was Tāra, a Vānara*. Her son was Angada. When the Asura* Māyāvi challenged Vāli to battle, Tāra and Vāli's brother Sugrīva accompanied Vāli. Vāli and Māyāvi were fighting inside a cave. When neither came out for a long time, Vāli's wife and brother assumed that Vāli had died and returned to the city. Sugrīva was crowned king of Kishkindha and Tāra became his wife. Later, Vāli returned, drove Sugrīva away from Kishkindha and took Tāra back. Tāra considered Vāli as her husband. Sometime later, Lord Rāma killed Vāli. Tāra was immensely saddened by her husband's death and expressed great anger at Rāma (*for the unethical manner in which He killed her husband*). She gave Rāma a Ṣāpa* that even if He manages to recover Sīta, they would be together only briefly. Rāma did not get angry with her, and instead, consoled her. After Sugrīva was crowned king, she became his wife again. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Tāraka I** – An Asura*, son of Surasa and her husband Sage Kaṣyapa. He had brothers named Ṣūrapadma and Simhavaktra. *Skānda Purāṇa*

**Tāraka II** – An Asura*. Son of Vajrānga (*literally "with diamond*

*limbs", signifying hardness*). He performed severe Tapas* directed towards Lord Brahma. The worlds were suffering from intense heat caused by his Tapas. Indra* and other Dēvas went to Lord Brahma and begged Him to make Tārakāsura stop his Tapas. Brahma manifested Himself in front of Tāraka and asked him to choose a boon. He asked that no one with strength equal to his should be born in Brahma's creation. Armed with this boon (*about the only boon that a God could refuse someone for his Tapas was total freedom from death*), Tāraka began to harass the worlds to his heart's content. Brahma told the Dēvas that only Kumāraswāmi, son of Lord Ṣiva can defeat Tāraka. The Dēvas then persuaded Ṣiva to marry Pārvati. Lord Ṣiva's son Kumāraswāmi fought and killed Tāraka. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Tārakāksha** – One of the three Asuras* known as Tripurāsuras. He had a son named Hari. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Tardama** – Kshētraja* son of King Ṣāradānḍāyani and his wife Ṣrutasēna. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Tārksha** – A Muni. A Brahmin boy was mistaken for a deer and killed by a Hayahaya King Dundhumāra, in the vicinity of his Āṣram. Saddened by this tragic event (*and probably fearing the consequences*) all the Hayahayas came to the Muni. The Muni's disciples set about providing hospitality to the visiting guests. They confessed to their crime and explained that they did not deserve the Muni's hospitality. Explaining that evils including fear, disease, death and sorrow cannot exist in his Āṣram, he called out to the Brahmin boy and asked, "Is this the boy your prince killed?" Wonderstruck, they asked the Muni how the dead boy came back

to life. He told them, "We are not vulnerable to death, sorrow or fear because we sincerely practice truth, purity, celibacy, hospitality to (*even uninvited*) guests, and peace." *Mahā Bhārata*

**Tārkshi** – A (*articulate*) bird. Daughter of Kandara. Drōṇa, a (*bird*) son of a Muni named Mandapāla married her. She, while pregnant, was flying over the battlefield during the Mahā Bhārata war. One of the arrows shot by Arjuna at the chariot of Bhagadatta hit her. Her stomach split and her eggs fell to the ground. A Muni named Ṣamīka gathered and saved her eggs. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Tāṭaka** – A female Asura*. Daughter of Sukēta. She had the strength of a thousand elephants. Sunanda, Jambha's son, married her. She was beautiful at one time but when she tried to harass Sage Agastya, he gave her a Ṣāpa* which made her ugly.

She gave birth to a son, Mārīcha. She, her husband and son were harassing Sages by trashing their sacrificial fires, stealing Yāga materials and pouring blood on their Āṣrams. Sage Viṣvāmitra brought Rāma to the forest to stop her. Rāma shot arrows at her and killed her. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Taṭātaka** – Daughter of a king named Malayadhwaja. She was born with three breasts. As a surprised Malayadhwaja was staring at her, Lord Ṣiva appeared and told him that Goddess Pārvati Herself was born as his daughter and that the third breast will disappear once she gets married. She used to attend her father's Sabha (*court*). She also led military campaigns and defeated many kings. Once she went to war against Sōmasaundara, but on seeing his handsome face, fell in love with him and married him. The couple had a son named Ugrapāṇḍya. Taṭātaka crowned the son,

entered Sōmasundara's temple and disappeared forever. *Skānda Purāṇa*

**Tējaṣṣrava** – Sister of Gāndhāri. Dhṛtarāshṭra married her as well. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Tējasvi** – Son of Dhṛḍhasya. Grandson of Sage Agastya. He was also called Idhmavāhu because he hauled large quantities of Idhma (*kindling*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Tilōttama** – An Apsara*. At the behest of Lord Brahma, Viṣvakarma* created her beautiful form with sesame seeds from all religious observances, as a means to destroy the Asura* brothers Sunda and Upasunda. She was Vṛkshaka (*daughter of Sage Bhṛgu*) in a previous life. She went to Lord Ṣiva and performed the Pradakshiṇa (*Sanskrit for ritual circling; performed around the Deity after worship, to indicate devotion*). Ṣiva caused a new head to be added to His body in each major direction she moved during the Pradakshiṇa (*reason Ṣiva is sometimes portrayed with five heads*). He then directed Tilōttama to proceed and perform the divine task assigned to her. On Brahma's direction, she went and stood near Sunda and Upasunda. Both the brothers fell in love with her and asked her which of them she would marry. She told them she would marry the one who defeats and stabs the other to death. They fought and stabbed each other to death. *Mahā Bhārata; Padma Purāṇa*

Once, while Tilōttama was on her way to meet Chandra (*the Moon God*), an Asura named Sāhasika (*son of Asura Emperor Bali*) stopped her and made love to her. Their squeals of delight during lovemaking disturbed Sage Durvāsa, who was performing

Tapas* nearby. The Sage gave her a Ṣāpa* that she will be born as a Rākshasi (*female Asura*). When she prayed to him for release from the Ṣāpa, he told her that she would be born as the daughter of Bāṇāsura, marry Lord Kṛshṇa's grandson and later regain her former form. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Tinna** – A hill tribal man. Once, while hunting, he saw the Ṣiva Linga* at Ṣrī Kāḷahasti and immediately started worshipping the Linga rather than returning home. He became a fanatic devotee of Ṣiva. He used to worship the Linga at Ṣrī Kāḷahasti, while holding pieces of cooked meat in both hands and with his mouth full of alcohol. Usually, there were foreign materials on the Linga from other peoples' worship. Since his hands were not free (*holding pieces of meat*), he used the shoes on his feet to clean the surface of the Linga. He would then wash the Linga with the alcohol in his mouth and place the pieces of meat on the Linga as Naivēdya (*ritual offering*). One day, as Tinna followed his usual procedure of cleaning the Linga and placing the Naivēdya, Ṣiva made tears appear from one of the eyes (*painted*) on the Linga. Tinna tried every tribal remedy he knew of to cure the disease in Ṣiva's eye but had no success. Finally, he removed one of his eyes and placed it on the Linga. Then the other eye on the Linga started to shed tears. Placing his big toe to mark the spot where the second eye was, he started to remove his other eye in order to place it on the Linga. Lord Ṣiva then appeared before him, and pleased by his devotion, granted him Mukti* and a permanent place on His abode.

Another devotee of Lord Ṣiva, named Ṣivabrāhmaṇa was offended at the manner in which Tinna worshipped the Linga.

Lord Ṣiva told him that Tinna was a great devotee, and showed him the above episode to demonstrate the level of Tinna's devotion.

Tinna was Arjuna in a previous life. When Arjuna fought Ṣiva (*who was disguised as a tribal huntsman*) and obtained the weapon named Pāṣupata, he was very unhappy that in his ignorance, he battled Lord Ṣiva Himself. He prayed to Ṣiva for salvation. Ṣiva told him that he will not attain salvation in that incarnation because he engaged in the killing of family members. He told Arjuna that he will be born as a hunter (*killer of animals*), will worship His Linga with great devotion and attain salvation. (*Ṣrī Kāḷahasti Māhātmyam is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**). *Ṣrī Kāḷahasti Māhātmyam*

**Tiruvenganānchi** – Wife of Chirutonḍa. She was a Pativrata* and a devotee of Lord Ṣiva. She never ate a meal until after an Atithi (*guest*) partook of one. She had her son, Siriyāḷu slaughtered as a meal for a guest. Lord Ṣiva and Goddess Pārvati (*who were the guests in disguise who demanded that the son be cooked for their meal*) appeared and granted her Mukti*. *Hara Vilāsam*

**Tittiri** – Son of Kadruva. A Nāga*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Trasa** – Son of Matināra and husband of Kāḷindi. Their son was Kilula. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Trasadasyu I** – A king. Once, Sage Agastya and two kings approached him seeking money. Because he was poor himself, he accompanied them to Ilvala. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Trasadasyu II** – A king of the Ikshvāku dynasty. Son of Purukutsa and father of Anaraṇya. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Trētāgnis** – Purūrava, whose love, Ūrvaṣi had left him, begged the Gandharvas* to return her to him. They gave him an Agni (*sacred fire*) and advised him to worship it. He divided the fire into three parts, worshipped them and reached Swarga (*heaven*). These sacred fires, divided into three parts, came to be known as Trētāgnis. The Trētāgnis were born to Ṣikhanḍini as three sons named Pāvaka, Pavamāna and Ṣuchi. *Bhāgavata*

**Tribandhana** – Son of Aruṇa and father of Satyavrata, also known as Triṣanku. *Bhāgavata*

**Tridhanva** – Son of Sumana and father of Trayyāruṇa. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Trigarta** – The kingdom ruled by Suṣarma (*ally of the Kauravas*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Trijaṭa I** – A poor Brahmin. He begged Rāma for a donation as Rāma was leaving for the forest (*to begin his fourteen-year exile in the forest*). Rāma pointed to his kingdom's cows and asked the Brahmin to throw a stick in their direction. The Brahmin was given all the cows upto the point where the stick landed. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Trijaṭa II** – Daughter of Vibhīshaṇa (*youngest brother of Rāvaṇa and a devotee of his brother's bitter enemy, Lord Rāma*). She was assigned the duty of guarding Sīta. She was the one who had dreamt that Rāma crossed the ocean and came to Lanka* and that her uncle Rāvaṇa died in the war. She informed Sīta of her dream. She treated Sīta with respect. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Trikaḷa** – Mahāmāya (*literally, the great illusion*). Once, when Brahma, Vishṇu, and Ṣiva were looking at each other as if they

were all one, a girl suddenly appeared. She was Mahāmāya. They gave her the name Trikaḷa. At their request, she divided herself into three entities, each of a different colour representing aspects of each of the Trimūrti (*white with aspects of Brahma, red with those of Vishṇu, blue for Ṣiva*). The white aspect of Brahma went to Ṣvēta (*white*) mountain and was performing Tapas*. Brahma went there and asked her to choose a boon. She desired that she shall permeate all things in the world. Brahma took her into Himself. From that time onwards, creation flourished.

Nārāyaṇi, the aspect of Vishṇu, was living a luxurious life in a city named Mandara. Sage Nārada visited Her there and after greeting Her with respect and devotion, expressed surprise that Lord Vishṇu had not yet taken Her for His Consort. Nārada then went to the Asura* Mahisha and informed him that a beautiful woman lives in Mandara city and that no woman of comparable beauty exists in the whole world. He also told the Asura that she is the perfect mate for him. Mahisha sent his army to capture and bring her to him. Nārada went back to Nārāyaṇi and said, "See, how arrogant Mahisha is? He is sending his army to capture you. No one but you can defeat him (*Nārada knew that Mahisha obtained a boon from Lord Ṣiva that he should die only at the hands of a woman, believing in his arrogance that no woman can even fight him*)." Asura Mahisha's army came. She defeated them. Mahisha himself came and attacked Her and was killed by Her.

The Ṣiva aspect of Trikaḷa killed an Asura named Ruru. She separated his Charma (*skin*) from his Munḍa (*head*), thereby acquiring the name Chāmunḍi. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Trikālagjna** – A Muni (*his name means someone with knowledge*

*of the past, the present, and future*). Once, Uttama (*who later became a Manu**) came to him and asked him who abducted the wife of Suṣarma and where she was hidden. The Muni directed one of his disciples to offer Arghya (*the respectable offering of water due to a venerable person*) to the king. The disciple said to the Muni, "Please think carefully and tell me what to do." The Muni, using his spiritual power (*because of which he got his name*), realized that the king was ineligible for Arghya because he did not have a wife and asked the king about the reason for his visit. He informed Uttama that the wife of Suṣarma was abducted by an Asura* named Balāka. When Uttama asked the Muni why no Arghya was offered to him, he was told that a wife-less personage was ineligible for Arghya. The Muni also informed Uttama that his wife Bahuḷa was stolen by an Asura named Sālapōtaka. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Tripurāsuras** – Three Asuras*. Their names were Vidyunmāli, Tārakāksha, and Kamalāksha. They were sons of an Asura named Tāraka. After their father fought a war against the Dēvas and was killed, they prayed to Lord Brahma. When Brahma appeared in answer to their prayers, they asked for a boon of immortality. Brahma told them that their wish was impossible. They then asked for three luxurious cities that could fly where they wanted to go. Brahma granted their wish with the proviso that as long as the cities and the brothers remained apart from each other, they could not be defeated by anyone but if they ever got together, they would lose their strength. They commissioned Maya* to construct, respectively, a city of gold, one of silver, and one of steel. Tārakāksha's son, named Hari, prayed to Lord Vishṇu and

obtained a boon of a pond in each of the cities of which the water had the magical power to not only bring back to life but create ten clones of any member of the three families whose dead body is dipped in it. Vishṇu granted the boon. Tripurāsuras were flying all over the three worlds in their cities, landing wherever they pleased. The gardens of the Dēvas and the dwellings of humans were getting crushed due to these landings. The Dēvas went and related their plight to Brahma. Brahma took them to Lord Ṣiva. Ṣiva told them that killing these Asuras was beyond His ability. He offered half His Tējas* and asked that Brahma and the others use it and their own powers to kill the Asuras. Brahma and the Dēvas offered their power to Ṣiva. Lacking the weapons and equipment needed for the task, they made the earth into a chariot, the Vēdas into horses, Sūrya and Chandra (*the Sun and Moon Gods*) into wheels and Brahma became the chariot driver. As a result of the boon they had received earlier, it would be impossible to kill them unless they were all together in one place. Lord Ṣiva, with his full Tējas, invoked the three Asuras. The three of them came together. Ṣiva deployed the Pāṣupatāstra (*weapon or arrow; Paṣupati [meaning Lord of Animals] is one of Ṣiva's names. This weapon was later given to Arjuna*) against them. The three cities burned down and the Asuras were killed. *Mahā Bhārata*

As the Tripurāsuras were harassing the three worlds, the Dēvas prayed to Lord Ṣiva. He shot an arrow at the three cities. The one arrow shot by Ṣiva divided itself into thousands of fiery weapons which enveloped the three cities. Maya, with his magical powers, sheltered them at the bottom of a pond of magical liquid which made the Asuras immune from attack. Lord Vishṇu, responding to

the prayers of the Dēvas, took the form of a beautiful cow, with Brahma as a calf. They drank the magical liquid in the pond, exposing the now weakened Asuras. Lord Ṣiva then shot at the three cities and destroyed them and the Tripurāsuras. *Bhāgavata*

**Triṣanku** – A king of the Sūrya (*solar; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Chandra, or lunar*) dynasty. He was the son of Trayyāruṇa and grandson of Tridhanva. His original name was Satyavrata. He once abducted a married woman by force and brought her home. Angered by his crime, his father banished him. When Triṣanku asked where he should go, his father scornfully replied, "Go, live with those who eat dogs!" Satyavrata left the kingdom. There was a drought in Tridhanva's kingdom for the next twelve years. Food was scarce. Sage Vasishṭha was guarding the kingdom. At the time, Sage Viṣvāmitra's family lived in the capital city. Suffering from starvation, Viṣvāmitra, dragging his son by a rope tied around his neck, was roaming the streets shouting, "I will give this boy. Will anyone give me a hundred cows? Or will you support my family?" Satyavrata came forward and agreed to support the family. Satyavrata held a deep resentment towards Sage Vasishṭha because when his father asked Satyavrata to get out of his home, Vasishṭha did not say a single word in his defence. With the intention of feeding Viṣvāmitra's family, he killed Vasishṭha's cow. But in his hunger, he ate the cow himself. Vasishṭha learned of this and told him, "There are three Ṣanka (*suspicion, stain or sin*) on you; the first, you hurt your father by your misdeed; second, you killed your Guru's cow; third, you ate the meat of an animal that was not killed in a religious sacrifice. You have become a Triṣanku." Satyavrata was known as Triṣanku

from then on.

[*After living in exile and even as an untouchable for many years, Triṣanku is eventually not only accepted by his father again, he is crowned king of Ayōdhya, by the grace of Dēvi. By virtue of being king of Ayōdhya, he regained Vasishṭha as the royal priest*] Triṣanku desired to go to heaven with his physical body and asked Vasishṭha to arrange a Yāga to make it possible. Vasishṭha told him that no mortal person can go to heaven with their physical body. Triṣanku, angry with Vasishṭha, abused him and asked Vasishṭha's sons to make his wish come true. They told him the same thing their father told him. He abused them too. They gave him a Ṣāpa* that he would lose his Kshatriya (*royal or warrior*) caste and become a Chhanḍāla (*untouchable*). Viṣvāmitra, mindful of the fact that Satyavrata assisted his family in their time of need, took pity on him and asked him what boon he would like. He asked Viṣvāmitra for the same thing that Vasishṭha refused to do for him. Viṣvāmitra agreed and summoned his disciples and other Munis to help him perform the Yāga but they all refused to cooperate. Viṣvāmitra then undertook the task all by himself and used up a considerable portion of his spiritual power (*obtained by his Tapas* over thousands of years*) to push Triṣanku bodily to heaven. Indra*, unwilling to accept Triṣanku in his mortal body in heaven, pushed him back. Falling back to earth, Triṣanku prayed to Viṣvāmitra who stopped Triṣanku from falling and vowed to create another heaven, more resplendent than the original. Indra came to Viṣvāmitra and implored him not to create another heaven. Viṣvāmitra made Indra to agree to let Triṣanku to stay where his fall was interrupted, midway between heaven and

earth. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*

**Triṣikha** – Indra*, in the epoch of the Manu* named Tāmasa. *Bhāgavata*

**Triṣira I** – Son of the Prajāpati* named Twashṭa. He had Triṣira (*means 'three heads'*). He performed Tapas* constantly. He was chanting the Vēdas with one face, looking around in all directions with the second, and drinking alcohol with the third. Indra* sent Apsaras* to distract him from his Tapas, but they could not divert his attention from the Tapas. Indra himself came and cut his heads off. Chātaka birds were born from one of the severed heads and partridges emerged from another head. Twashṭa created the Asura Vṛtra to avenge his son's death at the hands of Indra. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Triṣira II** – An Asura*. He was an associate of Khara and Dūshaṇa. He accompanied them to battle against Lord Rāma and Lakshmaṇa and was killed by them. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Trita** – One of Lord Brahma's mind-born sons. He had brothers named Ēkata and Dwita. Once, the three of them obtained cows as Dakshiṇa (*gifts*) from a king. His two brothers deceived him and took his share of the cows. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Trivakra** – A servant of Kamsa (*Lord Kṛshṇa's evil uncle*). She was a hunchback, with her body twisted into three curved parts (*Tri means three; vakra, twist*). She was also known as Kubja (*Sanskrit word for hunchback*). At the time, she was taking perfumed lotions she had prepared, to Kamsa. Kṛshṇa took the perfumes from her. Pleased by her, He put his feet on top of hers, and lifted her up by both His arms. This straightened her body out

and she became beautiful. She had a son named Upaślōka by Lord Kṛshṇa. *Bhāgavata*

**Trivṛshṭha** – Son of Vasudēva and his wife Dhṛtadēvi (*one of several sisters of Dēvaki, all of whom Vasudēva married*). *Bhāgavata*

**Tṛṇabindu** – Son of Budha (*different from both Gautam Buddha and son of Chandra and his Guru's wife Tāra*), who was the son of Vēgavanta. He had a daughter named Ilabila. His daughter's daughter, Alambasa fell in love with him and he married the youngster. They had a daughter named Ilabila and a son named Viṣāla. A Sage named Pulastya was performing Tapas* near his residence. Alambasa's daughter caused a disturbance at the Sage's Āṣram and received a Ṣāpa* due to which she became pregnant. Tṛṇabindu, realizing the girl was blameless (*did not have pre-marital sex*), requested Sage Pulastya to accept his daughter as his wife and performed their marriage. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

An Apsara* named Alambusa fell in love with him. A daughter, Ilabila was born to them. Kubēra (*the God of Wealth*) was the son of Ilabila by Viṣravasu. Tṛṇabindu had sons named Viṣāla, Ṣūnyabandhu, and Dhūmakētu. *Bhāgavata*

**Tṛṇāvarta** – An Asura* (*a king named Sahasrāksha in a previous life*). He was sent by Kamsa to kill Lord Kṛshṇa. He blew in in the form of a tornado and lifted Kṛshṇa off the ground. Kṛshṇa then made Himself very heavy. The Asura fell down, unable to keep His great weight in the air. Kṛshṇa then killed him. *Bhāgavata*

**Tulādhara** – A merchant who lived in the city of Vāraṇāsi (*more commonly known as Benares today*). He was a righteous and

honest man and conducted his business without being greedy. He never performed any Yāgas but he taught knowledge of Brahma* to Sage Jājili. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Tulasi** – Daughter of Dharmadhwaja and his wife Mādhavi. She was born with aspects of Goddess Lakshmi (*Goddess of Wealth, Consort of Lord Vishṇu*). She went to a forest named Badarīvana at a tender young age and performed Tapas*. When Lord Brahma appeared and asked her to choose a boon, she requested that Lord Vishṇu shall be her husband. Brahma gave her the boon she wanted and told her, "You will become a plant due to a Ṣāpa* by Lord Vishṇu. You will achieve high holiness. You will truly reach Lord Vishṇu." She was wandering in the forest, pining for the object of her affection. An Asura named Ṣankhachūḍa happened to see her and fell in love with her. Uncharacteristically for an Asura, he was a devotee of Vishṇu, and at least initially, had no quarrel with the Dēvas.

(*There are at least two differing versions of the lives and backgrounds of Tulasi and Ṣankhachūḍa. The author of a Telugu book named Pūrva Gāthā Lahari, which the present work generally follows, used a version from Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa. The author of the present work chose to use the version in Dēvī Bhāgavata, primarily because it is a better known and more accessible source*).

Ṣankhachūḍa asked Tulasi, "Who are you? Why are you wandering here?", as a conversation starter. Lord Brahma appeared in front of them and declared that the two of them were meant for each other and should get married. Since each was attracted to the other anyway, they got married in the Gāndharva* manner. Soon

after getting married, Ṣankhachūḍa started attacking the Dēvas (*Ṣankhachūḍa had a body armor called Vishṇu Kavacha, meaning the protective armor of Vishṇu, and a boon that he cannot be killed or defeated while he was wearing it*). The Dēvas were unable to withstand his fury. Goddess Kāḷi fought him, and even She was defeated. The Dēvas then brought Lord Ṣiva's elder son, Kumāraswāmi into the war with Ṣankhachūḍa. Hit by the Asura's arrows, Kumāraswāmi lost consciousness. The Dēvas carried his unconscious body to Ṣiva. Lord Ṣiva himself entered the fray then, however, even He could not defeat Ṣankhachūḍa due to the protection afforded by the armor and his wife's virtue. Ṣiva then requested Lord Vishṇu to somehow deprive Ṣankhachūḍa of the armor. Vishṇu, disguised as a Brahmin, approached Ṣankhachūḍa and asked for the armor as Dāna (*donation or gift. It is well known that in the olden days, no ruler or other powerful person can deny any request by a Brahmin. This self-imposed vulnerability was exploited by Indra* to make it possible for Arjuna to kill Karṇa, for instance*). Ṣankhachūḍa honoured the fake Brahmin's request. Ṣiva was then able to kill him. As soon as he got the armor, Lord Vishṇu put it on and disguised as Ṣankhachūḍa, went to Tulasi. Overjoyed that her husband had returned triumphant in the war against the Dēvas, Tulasi gave him a feast and later, slept with him. However, during the love-making, she noticed some subtle differences in his behaviour. Convinced that it was someone else disguised as her husband, she rose, ready to give him a Ṣāpa*. Realizing the danger of a Pativrata's* Ṣāpa, Lord Vishṇu revealed his true form and explained that He was only implementing the boon she received from Brahma that Vishṇu

would be her husband. He also revealed to her that she was a part of Goddess Lakshmi and it was time to return to Vaikunṭha. He also stated that part of her would remain on earth as the river Ganḍaki, her hair will become the Tulasi plant and Tulasi leaves will be the most sacred objects and most pleasing to Him. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

At the spot where Vṛnda (*wife of Jalandhara*) immolated herself, Lord Vishṇu stood, petrified and unable to move. The Dēvas sprinkled some seeds, from which a Tulasi plant sprung up. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Tulyabhāga** – A river, named for an Asura* named Tulyabhāga. Dēvas including Indra* used to gather there, believing that Lord Ṣiva (*in the form of Bhīmēṣwara*), would appear. While some Asuras were performing Tapas* at a nearby river, the Sapta Ṛshis (*seven Sages*) were channeling the river Gōdāvari which flooded the place where the Asuras were performing Tapas and washed away the Asuras' religious artifacts. Furious at the loss of their objects, the Asuras gave the Sages a Ṣāpa* that the river they were directing will run dry. The Sages in turn gave the Asuras a Ṣāpa that the river the Asuras were at, will be unholy and untouchable. One of the Asuras, the righteous Tulyabhāga, persuaded the Sages and Asuras that it is improper to trade Ṣāpas, and made peace between the groups. Because it is impossible to totally withdraw a Ṣāpa once it is spoken, the Dēvas made exceptions to the effect that bathing in the Tulyabhāga river on holy days and Sundays cleanses one's sins and that if a married couple bathed in it together, they would have children. (*Bhīmēṣwara Khanḍa is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**). *Bhīmēṣwara Khanḍa*

**Tumburu** – A Gandharva*. He was a courtier in the Sabha (*court*) of Kubēra (*God of Wealth*). He had a Vīṇa (*seven-stringed musical instrument, probably the oldest*) named Kaḷāvati. Once, entranced by the dance of the Apsara* Rambha, he ignored some chores he owed Kubēra, who gave him a Ṣāpa* that he will be born as an Asura*. As a result, he was born as an Asura named Virādha. *Rāmāyaṇa*

Once, Tumburu and his wife were going to Lord Ṣiva's abode to worship Him. On the way he happened to see Sage Durvāsa giving the left-over food from his dinner to young deer. Surprised and happy at the Sage's affection for animals, Tumburu snapped his fingers. This startled the deer and they ran away. This made Sage Durvāsa angry (*there was not much that did not make him a*ngry) and he gave the couple a Ṣāpa that they will be born as humans. As a result of the Ṣāpa, Tumburu was born as the merchant Chirutonḍa. *Hara Vilāsam*

**Turvasa** – Son of Yayāti and and his wife Dēvayāni. Brother of Yadu. Once his father asked Turvasa to give his youth to him and take his old age. Turvasa declined. The father then gave him a Ṣāpa* that his descendants will be ineligible to be rulers. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Tushita** – Daughter of a Brahmin named Vēdaṣira in the epoch of Swārōchisha Manu*. Lord Vishṇu was born to her as a son named Vibhu. *Bhāgavata*

**Tushitas** – Dēvas. Their names were Tōsha, Pratōsha, Santōsha, Bhadra, Ṣānti, Niḍaspati, Kavi, Vibhu, Vahni, Sudēva, and Lōchana. Their parents were Ākūti's son Yagjna and her daughter

Dakshiṇa. *Bhāgavata*

**Twashṭa** – A Prajāpati*. He created a being named Viṣvarūpa, with three heads, to harm Indra*, with whom he had a score to settle. Indra killed Viṣvarūpa. Even angrier with Indra now, he performed a Hōma* and created an Asura named Vṛtra. Indra, terrified by Vṛtra, ran away. *Mahā Bhārata*

Twashṭa had a daughter named Padmakōmala. *Skānda Purāṇa*

**Twāshṭra** – Son of Ṣukra (*Guru of the Asuras**). *Mahā Bhārata*

## – U –

**Ucchaiṣṣrava** – Indra's* horse. The horse emerged when the ocean of milk was churned. Once, as the horse was roaming on the seashore, Kadruva and Vinata (*wives of Sage Kaṣyapa*) saw it. Vinata said the horse was white and Kadruva said part of its tail was black. The horse thus became the reason for the blood feud between Kadruva and Vinata. *Mahā Bhārata; Bhāgavata*

**Uchathya** – Son-in-law of Sōma (*another name of Chandra, the Moon God*). Varuṇa (*the Rain God*) once abducted Uchathya's wife while Uchathya was bathing in the Yamuna river. Sage Nārada informed Uchathya of what Varuṇa had done. Uchathya sent Nārada himself to Varuṇa to convince him that it was an improper act for a Dikpati*. Varuṇa did not heed Nārada's message. Uchathya then went to Varuṇa's city and made all the water in it to evaporate and converted the city into a dust bowl. Varuṇa was terrified by Uchathya's power and returned his wife to him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Udanka I** – A descendant of Sage Bhṛgu. He was a disciple of Sage Gautama. When Gautama showered gifts and blessings on all his other disciples before sending them on their way but did not even look at Udanka, Udanka was not upset. He continued to serve

his Guru with devotion. One day, while Udanka was bringing a bundle of wood, his pleated hair got caught in the bundle and fell off. Udanka, noticing that the hair was gray, started to cry. Gautama told his daughter that Udanka's tears should not be allowed to fall to the ground and asked her to go and collect them in her cupped hands. While doing as instructed by her father, her hands were scorched by the hot tears and she let the tears drop to the ground. The earth was traumatised by the tears. Gautama asked Udanka why he was crying. Udanka asked Gautama why he did not show him the kindness he showed all his other disciples. Gautama told him that he will be blessed with eternal youth and asked him to marry his daughter. Udanka married Gautama's daughter and was very happy. He told Gautama's wife Ahalya that he would bring her any thing she desired. She said to him, "A king named Mitrasaha has a queen named Madayanti. Bring me her earrings." Udanka set out to fulfill her wish and on the way in the forest, saw a king whose whole body was covered in blood. On seeing Udanka, the king said, "I am starving. You came at the right time, I will eat you" and was about to pounce on Udanka. Udanka said, "I am on a mission for my Guru. You can eat me after I finish it." He added that it was the king's wife's earrings that his Guru's wife desired and begged the king to enable him to obtain them. The king agreed to help him and gave him an object his wife would recognise as being her husband's. Udanka went and showed the object to Madayanti. She gave him her earrings. She told him, "If you are unclean or put these on the ground, you will lose them. Dēvas, Gandharvas*, and Nāgas* want to steal them. Carry them with the utmost care."

As he was returning with the earrings, Udanka saw Mitrasaha and told him that he got the earrings, that he will deliver them to his Guru's wife and return. Mitrasaha could then eat him. Mitrasaha was greatly impressed by Udanka's honesty and devotion to his Guru. He said, "Brahmins are very powerful. A Brahmin's Ṣāpa* caused this sad state of mine. Please release me from the Ṣāpa." When Udanka touched Mitrasaha, he was released from the Ṣāpa and became his normal self. Proceeding on his way back, Udanka was hungry. He hung the earrings from a tree limb and climbed the tree to gather its fruits to eat. A sudden gust of wind shook the tree and the earrings fell to the ground. A serpent immediately grabbed them and took them to Nāga Lōka. Udanka started to dig the earth with a stick. Indra* appeared and asked him (*sarcastically*) if it was possible to reach Nāga Lōka by digging with a stick. Udanka replied that he will keep digging until he reached Nāga Lōka and that he will not give up even if the task costs him his life. Indra, impressed by his determination, turned the stick into a sharp trident. Scared, the earth gave way and Udanka reached Nāga Lōka. There he saw a horse which told him to blow into its behind and that his mission will be successful. The horse informed Udanka that it was actually Gautama's Guru, Agni. As Udanka did so, fire erupted from each follicle of the horse. Unable to bear the heat, the serpents brought the earrings and returned them to Udanka. He took the earrings to the Āṣram and presented them to Ahalya.

Once, while Udanka was in his Āṣram performing Tapas*, Lord Kṛshṇa, at the end of the Mahā Bhārata war, happened to be passing by the Āṣram and stopped in to see Udanka. Angry with

Kṛshṇa for engineering a war between Kauravas and Pānḍavas in which both were destroyed, Udanka threatened to give Kṛshṇa a Ṣāpa. Lord Kṛshṇa explained the background and rationale for the war, revealed that He was the Supreme Being. He showed Udanka his Viṣvarūpa (*His form as the whole Universe*) and asked him to make a wish (*for a boon*). Udanka said seeing Him was itself his greatest wish fulfilled. Kṛshṇa insisted that He will grant anything Udanka desired. Udanka said, "This is barren, drought-stricken land and there is scarcely any water. Make it so that there will be water whenever I wish for it." Kṛshṇa told him that when he wants water, all he had to do was to 'think of'* Him. One day, feeling thirsty, Udanka 'thought of' Kṛshṇa. An untouchable man, with sores all over his body came and said to Udanka, "Perhaps you wished for water; I will give it to you, drink". Udanka, disgusted by the man's appearance, refused the offer. Lord Kṛshṇa appeared and told Udanka, "That was Indra. I sent him to give you Amṛtam*, he was unwilling to give Amṛtam to a mortal man. He did what he did in order to avoid disobeying me." Kṛshṇa, to follow through on His boon, gave Udanka water to drink.

(*It is not uncommon for the story of the same person or Deity to be presented with different perspectives and details in different Purāṇas. However, Udanka seems to be unique in that the same Purāṇa, namely the Mahā Bhārata, has two stories with slightly different details about him, e.g., a different Guru, a different king, in different parts of the epic. The story above was in the first canto [Ādi Parva] and the following story is in the fourteenth canto [Aṣvamēdha Parva]. The third story, also from the Mahā Bhārata, appears to be about a different Sage and is from the*

*third canto [Araṇya Parva]*).

Udanka was a disciple of Sage Pyla. After completion of his studies, his Guru's wife asked him to bring her the earrings of King Paushya's queen. While travelling through the forest on his way to Paushya, Udanka encountered a man riding an ox who forced him to eat the dung of the ox. After that, he quickly reached Paushya and asked for his queen's earrings (*in ancient India, there was no question of a king or even an ordinary Kshatriya declining a Brahmin's 'request'*). The king told him to ask his queen for her earrings. He went to the queen's Antahpura*, but could not find her. He went back to the king, told him he could not see the queen and asked that the king get him the earrings himself. The king told Udanka that he was unable to see the queen because he was unclean. Udanka then washed his hands, feet, and face; performed Āchamana (*ritual sipping of water*) and when he went back to the Antahpura, was able to see the queen. She gave him her earrings and warned him that Takshaka, one of the Nāga sons of Kadruva will try to steal them and cautioned him to guard them at all times. The king requested him to eat a meal in his place before going on his way. In his food, Udanka found a hair. Angry that insufficient care was taken in preparing and serving his meal, he gave the king a Ṣāpa that he will become blind. The king gave Udanka a counter-Ṣāpa that he will be childless. Udanka requested the king to withdraw the Ṣāpa. The king said he did not have the ability to alter or withdraw a Ṣāpa after giving it. Udanka, probably regretting his haste in giving a Ṣāpa, told the king he will be released from the Ṣāpa in a short time. The king also urged Udanka to guard the earrings with extreme care against theft. On

his way, Udanka placed the earrings in a clean spot by the shore of a lake and stepped in to perform Āchamana. Takshaka, waiting for just such an opportunity, stole the earrings. Udanka stepped out of the lake and realizing that Takshaka had stolen them, pursued him to Nāga Lōka. There Udanka sang the praises of the Nāga kings. A Divya (*God-like*) man appeared to him. Udanka obtained a boon from him that the Nāgas would be under his control. Armed with the boon, he created an agitation all over the Nāga Lōka. Terrified, Takshaka came to him and returned the earrings. The God-like man gave his horse to Udanka, who was then able to return to his Guru's Āṣram quickly and presented the earrings to his Guru's wife. When he narrated the happenings in Nāga Lōka, he learnt from his Guru that the God-like man was Indra, that the horse was Airāvata (*the elephant that Indra rides; it emerged when the Dēvas and Asuras churned the ocean of milk*) and the dung he ate was Amṛtam. Udanka never forgot or forgave Takshaka's crime. He went to the Emperor Janamējaya (*great-grandson of Arjuna*) who was performing a Sattra Yāga and saying "O! King! Takshaka was your father's murderer. You should exact revenge from him. You should perform a Sarpa Yāga (*which consists of throwing any serpent found, into the sacrificial fire*) and cause the destruction of the race of Takshaka", he had Janamējaya perform the Sarpa Yāga. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Udanka II** – A Muni. He performed Tapas directed towards Lord Vishṇu, who appeared and asked him to name the boon he would like. Udanka said, "There is no greater boon than seeing You. Please make me capable of being calm under any circumstances, and of concentrating on a righteous and truthful way of life. I wish

to always be a devotee of Yours." Lord Vishṇu told the Muni, "You would attain supreme knowledge of Yōga but you need to help in a great task. An Asura* named Dundhu is harassing all the worlds. You are the one who will encourage King Kuvalayāṣva to kill him. Kuvalayāṣva will be enabled by the Yōga Bala (*spiritual strength*) I shall bestow on him and the Yōga Bala you possess." The Asura lived in a cave near Udanka's Āṣram and his mere breath was shaking the forest. The whole area became unfit for human habitation. Udanka went to the king of Ayōdhya, Bṛhadaṣva and advised hm to kill the Asura. The king had just handed the kingdom over to his son Kuvalayāṣva and was about to go away to the forest. He said he would not arm himself again and suggested the Muni seek out his son for the task. Udanka counseled Kuvalayāṣva to fight the Asura. Kuvalayāṣva killed Dundhu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Udaraṣāṇḍilya** – A Ṛshi. He was proficient in the science named Udgītha. He was a disciple of Atidhanva. *Chāndōgya Upanishad*

**Uddālaka I** – Son of Araṇi. Two men, Prāchīnaṣāla and Satyayagjna, even though they had studied the Vēdas thoroughly, could not comprehend the nature of the Supreme Being, Brahma*. They were coming to Uddālaka's Āṣram, hoping that he could enlighten them. Uddālaka saw them coming from a distance and knew their purpose in coming to him. As soon as they arrived, he told them that he could not teach them what they were seeking. He also told them that King Aṣvapati of Kēkaya is knowledgable in the matter and he would accompany them to go and learn it from the king. When they met the king, he offered them enormous wealth. They told him they did not seek wealth but rather to learn

the nature of Brahma. The king taught them what they were seeking. *Chāndōgya Upanishad*

**Uddālaka II** – A Brahmin. After he completed his Brahmacharya (*the first of the four stages of the life of a Brahmin male, during which he is expected to remain celibate and receive the appropriate education; the next and only other mandatory stage is Gṛhasta, literally householder, during which he will get married and raise a family. The two others are Vānaprastha, involving some level of renunciation of worldly affairs while remaining married; and Sanyāsa, meaning total renunciation, including family*), he married a woman named Chanḍika. She was wild and unruly, doing the exact opposite of every thing she should do. Uddālaka was very unhappy that he lost his Brahmacharya status without gaining the benefits of Gṛhasta status. Uddālaka went to the great Sage Kaunḍinya and related his plight. The Sage advised him to use reverse psychology, i.e., since she does the opposite of what he asks her to do, ask her to do the opposite of what he actually wants her to do. Uddālaka followed the Sage's advice and was able to lead a peaceful life. Then, observing that the next day was the anniversary of the death of one of his ancestors (*a Brahmin provides for his dead ancestors or Pitṛ Dēvas by a religious observance that includes fasting, chanting of Mantras, and providing a feast to good Brahmins cooked by a chaste lady who bathes before cooking*), he told his wife to cook a meal without taking a bath and wearing unclean clothes. The next morning, she did the opposite, i.e., took a bath before cooking the meal and wearing fresh, clean clothes. He then told her to not serve the Brahmins who had arrived. She served

them, taking care that they got every dish in its proper sequence. Uddālaka was deliriously happy that every thing went so smoothly that he forgot to use reverse psychology. Instead he told her to carefully guard the meal he should eat to break his fast. She promptly threw his meal on the garbage heap. He could not contain his anger at this misbehaviour. He gave her a Ṣāpa* that she would become a rock at the foot of the Vindhya mountain. She cried and begged him for release from the Ṣāpa. He told her she would be released from the Ṣāpa when Dharmaraja's (*the eldest of the five Pānḍavas*) sacrificial horse steps on the rock. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Uddālaka III** – A Muni. Father of Ṣvētakētu and maternal uncle of Ashṭāvakra. Once, a guest in his house desired his wife and had sex with her (*Brahmins, of whom Munis are a subset, and Kshatriyas were honour bound to not deny any desire of a guest, even an improper one*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Uddhava I** – He was very devoted to Lord Kṛshṇa and when he was only five years old, he mistook another boy for Kṛshṇa. He followed the other boy everywhere and was doing chores for him, and he would not go when his mother called him to dinner. He was the one who informed the Pānḍavas and others on their return from their pilgrimage that Kṛshṇa had ended His incarnation. Vidura (*the Pānḍavas' uncle*) requested Uddhava to teach him the spiritual knowledge he received from Kṛshṇa. However, Uddhava advised him to learn it from Sage Maitrēya instead. After the Yādavas and Vṛshṇis annihilated each other, he remained alive to protect and propagate their knowledge, and afterwards retreated to the Badarika forest. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Uddhava II** – Son of Dēvabhāga. of the Vṛshṇi dynasty and friend of Kṛshṇa. After killing Kamsa, Kṛshṇa sent a message to Nanda (*Lord Kṛshṇa's foster father*) and others through him. The Gōpikas (*cowherd women*) related to him their unhappiness at being apart from Kṛshṇa. He went back to Kṛshṇa (*who was in Mathura after killing Kamsa*) and accompanied Kṛshṇa to the house of Kubja and from there to meet with Akrūra. *Bhāgavata*

**Ugra** – Son of Lord Brahma. As a result of a wild sexual orgy, many thousands of sons were born to Brahma. (*Once upon a time, Brahma was in the grip of intense sexual desire that His Consort, Sarasvati, could not satisfy by Herself. Brahma asked Sarasvati to split Herself into a hundred beautiful young women so that he could experience sex in a wide variety of ways. Sarasvati complied with Her Lord's desire. Brahma, for a very long time, indulged in sexual acts with the hundred women that His Consort had become, to the exclusion of all other activities*.) These sons were cruel and vicious and were harassing all the people of the world. The people (*and Mother Earth*) related their plight to Brahma. Brahma became very angry with his sons, and from His anger, a son Ugra (*literally, means "terrible"*) was created. Brahma instructed Ugra to hunt down and kill his older brothers, the Asuras*.

Ugra waged a terrible war against the Asuras and killed them all. When he went to inform his father that all His Asura sons were dead, Brahma looked at him in sorrow and anger. Brahma's anger burned Ugra to death. As Brahma was repenting for the sin of Putra Hatya (*murder of a son*), Lord Ṣiva counseled Him and advised Him to make a pilgrimage to Dakshiṇa (*southern*) Kāṣi*

(*Kāḷahasti, Lord Ṣiva's southern abode*). When Brahma did so, a son named Ṛbhu was born to Him and Sarasvati. (*Ṣrī Kāḷahasti Māhātmyam is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**). *Ṣrī Kāḷahasti Māhātmyam*

**Ugraka** – Son of Kadruva. A Nāga. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ugrapāṇḍya** – King of the city of Madhura (*in south India, not the city of Kamsa*). He was the son of Sundarēṣwara and Taṭātaka. His wife was Kāntimati and they had a son Vīrapāṇḍya. Ugrapāṇḍya had performed ninety nine Yāgas. Indra*, afraid that he would lose his position if Ugrapāṇḍya completes the one hundredth Yāga, asked Samudra (*the Ocean God*) to submerge the city of Madhura. Ugrapāṇḍya had a dream in which Sundarēṣwara informed him of this potential calamiy. One night, the ocean rose up like in a tsunami, but fearing the wrath of Sundarēṣwara, receded. Then Indra ordered that no rain shall fall on Madhura. Ugrapāṇḍya, learning of this, captured clouds called Pushkalāvarta. Indra then came to fight Ugrapāṇḍya and was defeated. *Skānda Purāṇa*

**Ugrasēna I** – A Gandharva*, son of a woman named Muni. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ugrasēna II** – Descendant of Aniruddha (*grandson of Lord Kṛshṇa*). Son of Subāhu and father of Ṣrutasēna. *Bhāgavata*

**Ugrasēna III** – Younger brother of Janamējaya (*great-grandson of Arjuna*). When he was performing a religious sacrifice called Sattra Yāga and a dog came there, he beat the dog. The (*articulate*) dog complained to Janamējaya about him. In a previous life Ugrasēna was Swarbhānu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ugrasēna IV** – Son of Yāhuka, who was the son of Punarvasu. His brother was Dēvaka. He had sons named Kamsa, Nyagrōdha, Sunāmaka, and Subhu; and daughters named Ṣṛtadēvi, Kamsa, and Rāshṭrapālika. His son Kamsa imprisoned him and ruled as the king. Lord Kṛshṇa, after He killed Kamsa, released Ugrasēna from prison and enthroned him as king. Dēvaki (*mother of Kṛshṇa*) was his brother's daughter. Kamsa was not his Aurasa Putra (*own son*), but his wife's Kshētraja* son by an Asura. *Bhāgavata*

**Ugraṣravasa** – Sūta was another name for him. Son of a Muni named Rōmaharshaṇa. He learnt sacred tales from Sage Vaiṣampāyana and related them to Ṣaunaka and other Ṛshis. *Mahā Bhārata; Bhāgavata*

**Ugrāyudha** – A king. He was very valiant. He was excessively proud, having waged war against and defeated many kings. A few days after the death of King Ṣantanu (*father of Bhīshma*), he sent a messenger to Bhīshma threatening him that if Bhīshma did not give his step-mother Satyavati in marriage to him, he will kill Bhīshma. Bhīshma could not touch any weapons during Aṣuchi (*impure*) days (*Hindus observe thirteen days of mourning after the death of a blood relative, during which most normal activities are forbidden*). Bhīshma therefore asked the messenger to tell his master to behave in accordance with the moral code. Ugrāyudha, in violation of the moral code (*which prohibits attack against an unarmed opponent*), deployed his Chakra (*a weapon that looks like a small circular saw, similar to Lord Vishṇu's signature weapon*) against Bhīshma. The Chakra turned around and headed back to Ugrāyudha like a boomerang. After the Aṣuchi period, Bhīshma battled Ugrāyudha for three days and killed him. *Hari*

*Vamṣa*

**Ulmuka** – Son of Chākshusha. His wife was Pushkariṇi. Anga, Sumanasa, Khyāti, Kratu, Angirasa and Gaya were their sons. *Bhāgavata*

**Ulūchi** – (*Also known as Ulūpi*) A Nāga* woman. Daughter of Kauravya. She fell in love with Arjuna while he was bathing in a lake during his pilgrimage, and using her magical powers, transported him to her palace in Nāga Lōka without his knowledge. She told him that she had been in love with him for a long time based on what she had heard of his reputation, and requested him to make love to her. Arjuna initially demurred that he was bound by his observance of the strictures of pilgrimage and could not engage in intimacy with her. She said, "If you do not satisfy my desire, I will be consumed by cupid's fire and die. Are the restrictions of your pilgrimage more important than saving a life?" Arjuna relented and made love to her (*each of the Pānḍavas had at least one other wife for himself alone, in addition to Draupadi, whom they all shared*). A son named Irāvanta was born to her and Arjuna. She did not accompany Arjuna afterward. She stayed in her father's place for a long time but her love for Arjuna did not weaken.

Once, while she was bathing in the river Ganga, she overheard the Vasus saying, "We should give Arjuna a Ṣāpa* to be consigned to Naraka (*hell*) because he hid behind Ṣikhanḍi to kill Bhīshma". Saddened, she went and related what she heard, to her father. Her father went to the Vasus and requested them to tell him how Arjuna can be released from the Ṣāpa. They told him that Arjuna would be saved from the Ṣāpa if he fought against his son.

Kauravya informed his daughter of the remedy for the Ṣāpa. She never forgot what she learned and when Arjuna was following the sacrificial horse, she encouraged Babhruvāhana, Arjuna's son by Chitrāngada, to capture the horse. Arjuna and Babhruvāhana fought. Arjuna was hit by an arrow and fell unconscious. Ulūchi brought Sanjīvani (*a magical herb with the power to revive the dead*) and gave it to Babhruvāhana who put it on his father's heart. Arjuna was revived and got up. *Mahā Bhārata; Jaimini Bhārata*

**Ulūka I** – Son of Ṣakuni (*brother of Gāndhāri and uncle of Duryōdhana*). As the Pāṇḍavas were making preparations for the war, Ulūka was sent by Duryōdhana with instructions to convey some harsh and insulting messages to them. Dharmarāja, the eldest Pāṇḍava, listened to him bravely repeat Duryōdhana's insulting messages and gave him their reply. Ulūka fought Sahadēva in the war and was killed by him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ulūka II** – A country that was ruled by a king named Bṛhanta. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ulūra** – Son of Hiraṇyāksha (*the Asura* killed by the third incarnation of Lord Vishṇu, Varāha*). *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Unmatta** – Son of the Asura* Mālyavanta. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Unnābha** – Son of Ṣila and father of Vajranābha. *Raghu Vamṣa*

**Upabarhaṇa** – A Gandharva*. He was loved by beautiful women and lived for romance with them. Once, Brahma, the creator, was performing a Yāga called Dēvasatra and asked Gandharvas and Apsaras* to sing devotional hymns to Lord Vishṇu. Upabarhaṇa went along with other Gandharvas and sang for a while but left,

attracted by the beauty of the Apsaras. Brahma gave him a Ṣāpa* that he would be born to a low-caste woman. He was born as the son of a servant woman and later became Sage Nārada. *Bhāgavata*

Once, Upabarhaṇa saw the Apsara Rambha dancing in Indra's* Sabha (*court*). He was sexually aroused by the sight and ejaculated spontaneously. Brahma happened to be looking in his direction and upset with his behaviour, gave him a Ṣāpa that he would be born to a low-caste human woman. He was born as the son of a cowherd woman named Kaḷāvati. Entreated by Upabarhaṇa's wife Mālāvati, Brahma withdrew the Ṣāpa after a while. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Upadānavi** – Daughter of Vaiṣvānara and wife of Hiraṇyāksha. *Bhāgavata*

**Upakīchakas** – Younger brothers of Kīchaka, brothers-in-law of King Virāṭa. Convinced that Draupadi was responsible for the death of their older brother Kīchaka, they grabbed Draupadi (*who was disguised as Sairandhri, beautician to the Queen*), tied her to Kīchaka's corpse and were preparing to burn her to death on the funeral pyre. Hearing Draupadi's cries, Bhīma uprooted some nearby trees to attack the Upakīchakas. Scared at seeing Bhīma, they left Draupadi and their brother's corpse and ran. Bhīma pursued them and killed them. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Upakōsala** – Son of man named Kamala and disciple of Satyakāma. Satyakāma kept Upakōsala in his Āṣram after he permitted all his other graduating disciples to get married, with the intention of teaching him Brahmagjnāna (*knowledge of the nature of Brahma*, the Supreme Being*). Satyakāma's wife asked him

why he would not allow Upakōsala entry into Gṛhasta status even though he was the most studious and dedicated disciple of his. His Guru's failure to give him permission to get married was bothering Upakōsala too. Satyakāma also made Upakōsala responsible for maintaining and protecting the Agnis (*sacred fires*) in the Āṣram during his trip to a nearby village. Upset at his Guru's mistreatment, Upakōsala undertook fasting while he took good care of the Agnis. The Agnis were pleased by Upakōsala's devotion and taught him Brahmagjnāna. Satyakāma returned and said to Upakōsala, "I see signs of Brahmagjnāna on your countenance. Who taught it to you?" Upakōsala answered that the Agnis had taught him and said, "Brahmagjnāna should be learnt from a Guru. So please teach me", and learned it again from Satyakāma. *Chāndōgya Upanishad*

**Upamanyu** – A Brahmin boy. During his boyhood, he and his mother lived in the forest. Once, during his childhood, when he cried for milk, his mother mixed some flour with water and gave it to him. He drank it and realizing it was not milk, he started to cry again. When his mother asked how she can get him milk in the forest, he replied that he would obtain some and started to pray to Lord Ṣiva. After Upamanyu performed Tapas* for some time, Lord Ṣiva, wanting to test him, appeared before him disguised as Indra* and asked him to choose a boon. Upamanyu replied, "I want nothing from you. I am praying to Lord Ṣiva." The disguised Ṣiva said, "You are but a child and cannot perform the required Tapas. I will give you what you desire." Upamanyu refused to ask him for anything and threw ash at him while reciting a Mantra. Lord Ṣiva then assumed His own form and created oceans of milk

and curd so that Upamanyu will have food whenever he wanted. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Upa Pāṇḍavas** – Prativindya, Ṣrutasōma, Ṣrutakīrti, Ṣatānīka, and Ṣrutasēna. They were Draupadi's sons by Dharmarāja, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadēva respectively. *Mahā Bhārata*

They were Dēvas named Viṣvas in their previous lives. Once, while traveling somewhere (*above the earth*), they saw Viṣvāmitra yelling at Chandramati, the wife of Emperor Hariṣchandra. He was asking her to immediately get out of town while generally abusing her and harassing her. They said to each other, "How can such a cruel Muni be allowed in Puṇya* Lōka?" Viṣvāmitra, overhearing their conversation, was irate and gave them a Ṣāpa* that they will be born as mortal men. They begged him to remove the Ṣāpa. Viṣvāmitra, saying the Ṣāpa is irrevocable, took pity on them and amended the Ṣāpa to the extent that they would live on earth only for a short time and die while they were still bachelors. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

Aṣvatthāma killed the Upa Pāṇḍavas in their sleep after the Mahā Bhārata war. They died without getting married. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Upaplāvya** – A place where the Pāṇḍavas stayed for some time between their year of Agjnāta Vāsa (*living incognito*) and the commencement of the war. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Uparicharavasu** – A king who ruled a kingdom named Chēdi. Indra*, pleased with his Tapas*, gave him an open invitation to visit him and gave him a divine flying vehicle in order to facilitate his visits, a lotus garland and a wooden flute. Uparicharavasu made frequent trips using the vehicle to visit Indra, so much so

that he acquired the nickname "Uparichara" (*he who travels above*). A mountain named Kōlāhala (*in the Purāṇas, mountains are anthropomorphed into men*) was blocking the course of a river (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*) named Ṣuktimati. Uparicharavasu kicked the mountain out of the way and cleared the way for the river to flow. The grateful river rewarded Uparicharavasu by giving him her son named Vasupada and daughter named Girika. Vasu made Vasupada the commander of his army and married Girika.

Once, Uparicharavasu went to the forest to obtain some venison for his wife who was having her menstrual period. While in the forest, he was thinking fondly of his beloved and ejaculated. Not willing to let his semen go to waste, he put it in a bowl made of leaves and gave it to an eagle and asked it to give the semen to Girika. On the way, the bowl slipped from the eagle's grip and fell in the river. A fish swallowed the semen and became pregnant. A son named Matsyarāja and a daughter named Matsyagandhi were born to the fish. Uparicharavasu had sons named Bṛhadratha, Maṇivāhana, Saubala, Yadu and Rājanya before he married Girika.

Once upon a time, the Dēvas and Ṛshis had a disagreement regarding the meaning of "Aja" in the sentence "Ajēnayashṭavyam". The Dēvas said it meant "goat" and the Ṛshis, who were opposed to the killing of animals, said it meant "seeds". Seeing Uparicharavasu flying overhead, they asked him to settle the dispute. Realizing the position of the Dēvas, Uparicharavasu said it meant "goat" in that context. The Ṛshis, noticing that Uparicharavasu's judgment was partisan, gave him a Ṣāpa* that he would fall in a deep ditch. Uparicharavasu was saved from the

Ṣāpa and returned to the surface due to his devotion to Lord Vishṇu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Upaṣlōka** – Son of Kamsa's servant Trivakra and Lord Kṛshṇa. A great devotee of Kṛshṇa, he became a disciple of Sage Nārada and a great teacher of divine knowledge. *Bhāgavata*

**Upasunda** – Son of an Asura* named Nikumbha. He was the younger brother of Sunda. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Upayāji** – A Brahmin. Younger brother of Yāji. He had acquired a great amount of spiritual power by his constant performance of Tapas. His lineage was that of Kaṣyapa. King Drupada, needing a son who could destroy his arch-enemy Drōṇa (See **Arjuna**), came to Upayāji and said, "Sir, I will give you one hundred thousand cattle. Be the priest at my Putra Kāmēshṭi Yāga*." Upayāji told him, "I do not seek a reward. Go and get your wish from someone who does." Drupada would not accept his refusal and continued to respectfully serve him for a year. Upayāji told King Drupada, "My brother took a fruit that fell in a place which could not be confirmed to be clean. Someone desirous of reward does not care about any bad side-effects of that reward. Go ask him to be the priest at your Yāga." Drupada went to his brother and at his brother's request, Upayāji joined him as a priest for Drupada's Yāga. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ūrja** – Wife of Sage Vasishṭha. Chitrakētu, Surōchi, Viraja, Mitra, Ulbaṇa, Vasubṛddhyāna, and Dyumanta were their sons. *Bhāgavata*

**Ūrjasvati** – Daughter of Priyavrata, son of Swāyambhu Manu*. Wife of Ṣukra (*Guru of the Asuras*). Their daughter was Dēvayāni.

*Bhāgavata*

**Urmiḷa I** – Wife of Yama (*God of Death*). *Bhāgavata*

**Ūrmiḷa II** – Daughter of Sīta's uncle. Wife of Lakshmaṇa (*Lord Rāma's younger brother*). She remained asleep throughout the time her husband was in the forest with Rāma. She was awakened on Lakshmaṇa's return, and reunited with him after proof of his identity by his distinguishing marks was shown to her. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ūrmiḷa III** – A Gandharva* woman. Mother of Sōmada. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Ūrṇanābha** – Son of Viṣvakarma*. With powers he obtained by worshipping Lord Ṣiva, he was creating every thing to rival Lord Brahma's creations. An angry Brahma gave him a Ṣāpa* that he would become an insect of the same name (*Ūrṇanābhi is Sanskrit for spider*). When he begged for a means of release from the Ṣāpa, Brahma said, "Go and live in the Kuja forest. You will be carried to the Linga* of Lord Ṣiva that will rise there. You will worship that Linga and achieve Mukti*." (See **Ṣrī**) *Mahā Bhārata*

**Ūru** – Son of Chākshusha Manu*. His wife was Āgnēyi. Agni (*different from the Fire God*), Sumanasa, Anga, Khyāti, Gaya, Kratu, and Angiras were their sons. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Urukrama** – Lord Vishṇu Himself was born as the son of Mēru Dēvi and her husband King Nābhi and was named Urukrama. He taught the path to Mukti* to great scholars. *Bhāgavata*

**Uruṣrava** – Son of Satyaṣrava and father of Dēvadatta. *Bhāgavata*

**Ūrvaṣi** – An Apsara*. Once upon a time, when Nara and Nārāyaṇa

were performing Tapas*, Indra* sent some Apsaras to disturb them. The Apsaras created a distraction with their song and dance. Nārāyaṇa, opening His eyes, saw them and scratched his thigh with a finger. A woman, more beautiful than the Apsaras, was then born. She was named Ūrvaṣi because she was born from His Ūru (*thigh*). Seeing her, the Apsaras sent by Indra were embarrassed that someone was far more beautiful than themselves and left. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

Once Varuṇa (*the rain God*) and Sūrya (*the Sun God*) while going somewhere, saw Ūrvaṣi. Sexually aroused on seeing her, the Sun God experienced spontaneous ejaculation. Ūrvaṣi collected the semen and carefully placed it in a pot. Varuṇa then looked at her with desire. She said to him, "Sūrya first desired me. If appropriate, feel free to enjoy watching my beauty." Varuṇa also ejaculated. Ūrvaṣi put his semen in the same pot. Sages Vasishṭha and Agastya were born from that pot. Sūrya, envious that she allowed the same privilege to Varuṇa as he himself enjoyed, gave her a Ṣāpa* that she would go to earth and become the wife of Purūrava. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

An emperor named Purūrava once saw Ūrvaṣi, fell in love with her and expressed his desire to her. She consented but said if he was ever fully naked in front of her, she would leave him and return to heaven. They lived as man and wife for a while. Once, he saw a Gandharva* stealing Ūrvaṣi's pet fawn. Forgetting the condition she had imposed, he chased the Gandharva while stark naked. Ūrvaṣi saw him then and per her condition, left him and returned to Dēva Lōka (*heaven*). Purūrava, on his return from the chase for the fawn, searched for her everywhere and prayed to the

Dēvas. The Dēvas were kind enough to persuade her to return to Purūrava. She and Purūrava had sons named Dhīmanta, Āyu, Ṣatāyu, and Dhṛḍhāyu.

Once, Arjuna went to Amarāvati (*Indra's city in heaven*) on Indra's invitation. While he was there, Ūrvaṣi approached him in the evening, after moonrise. Arjuna greeted her saying, "Mother, my salutations." Ūrvaṣi replied, "I had heard about your qualities and attributes from Sage Nārada. I am in love with you and came here hoping you will make love to me. Is it fair to address me as Mother? How can there be family ties to divine courtesans? Everyone enjoys romance with us, so come, satisfy my desire." But Arjuna said, "You were the wife of Purūrava, the progenitor of our dynasty and therefore, like a mother to me. Being human, the rules and protocols of the Dēvas do not apply to me." Ūrvaṣi, angry and humiliated at Arjuna's rejection, gave him a Ṣāpa that he shall become a eunuch (*this Ṣāpa helped during the year the Pānḍavas had to remain incognito*). *Mahā Bhārata*

Once, Sage Vyāsa was rubbing sticks of kindling to make a fire. He saw Ūrvaṣi and ejaculated spontaneously. Afraid that the Muni might give her a Ṣāpa, Ūrvaṣi assumed the form of a parrot. Vyāsa looked at the parrot. Ṣuka was then born as Vyāsa's son. *Bhāgavata*

**Urvi** – Goddess Earth. Paraṣurāma (*the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu*) once gifted the whole earth to Sage Kaṣyapa. Some time later, the burden of sin became very heavy and the earth sank into Pātāḷa (*the nether world*). Kaṣyapa pushed the earth back up again by his Ūru (*thighs*). The earth came to be known as Urvi as a result. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Uṣana I** – Mother of Ṣukra, the Guru of Asuras*. (*Kāṣi Khanḍa is a Sthala Purāṇa**). *Kāṣi Khanḍa*

**Uṣana II** – Wife of Bhṛgu. *Bhāgavata*

**Uṣanasa** – Son of Bhṛgu. Priest of the Asuras*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Usha** – Daughter of an Asura* named Bāṇa. (*She was Tilōttama in her prvious l*ife). She prayed to and worshipped Lord Ṣiva and His Consort Pārvati hoping they will determine who is a suitable husband for her. In a dream, she saw a handsome man making love to her, and blushing, told her friend and companion Chitrarēkha about her dream. Chitrarēkha brought portraits of all the princes of the land to help her friend Usha identify the prince of her dream. Usha recognised Aniruddha (*grandson of Lord Kṛshṇa*) as the prince in her dream. Chitrarēkha went to Dwāraka, abducted the sleeping Aniruddha and put him in Usha's bedroom. Usha and Aniruddha fell in love with each other and made passionate love. Usha became pregnant. Hearing that some man broke into his palace without his permission or knowledge, Bāṇa had Aniruddha arrested. Lord Kṛshṇa, learning of his grandson's plight, went to Bāṇa's city to release him. Bāṇa was defeated by Kṛshṇa and consented to give his daughter in marriage to Aniruddha. Their son was named Vajra. *Bhāgavata*

**Ushasti** – A Ṛshi (*Sage*). His wife was Āṭaki. Ushasti and his wife lived in Kuru country. At one time, the country experienced hailstorms, as a result of which crops did not grow on the parched land. Unable to find food, Ushasti, starving and emaciated, went to the house of a Māvaṭi (*elephant-driver*), saw left-overs of a coarse grain called alachanda and begged the Māvaṭi to give them to him.

The Māvaṭi demurred that the left-over alachanda was not suitable food for a Brahmin. Ushasti insisted, took the alachanda and ate some. But when the Māvaṭi offered him some water to drink, Ushasti refused, saying he cannot accept water touched by a Māvaṭi. Shocked at this, the Māvaṭi asked why he ate left-over alachanda from a Māvaṭi. Ushasti replied, "I ate them to save my life. One is allowed to eat anything to save one's life. But now that I am not in danger of dying, I will not accept water from you." Ushasti took the remaining alachanda home and gave some to his starving wife to eat. He ate some of the same alachanda the next day before he went to the country's king to acquire some money. The king put him in charge of priestly duties for a Yāga he was performing and gave him much wealth. *Chāndōgya Upanishad*

**Ushṭrakarṇika** – A country in southern India. Sahadēva (*the youngest of the Pānḍavas*) took wealth from this country's king during the Pānḍavas' tour of conquest. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Uṣīnara I** – A king of the Paurava dynasty. Son of Mahāmahu. Once, with a view to testing Uṣīnara, Indra* took the form of a (*articulate*) hawk, and Agni that of a (*articulate*) pigeon. First, the pigeon landed near Uṣīnara, and shaking with fear, sought his Ṣaraṇu*. The king sheltered it and promised his protection. Then the hawk flew in and said to the king, "Why did you give Ṣaraṇu to this pigeon, which is my food? Give it back to me. If you do not give it to me, I, my wife and our babies will all die of starvation. Why do you want the sin of killing us all?" The king said he would not abandon those he promised to protect even at the cost of his own life, and offered the hawk some of his flesh as food. The hawk asked him to give it his flesh of the same weight as that of

the pigeon. The king had a scale brought, and as they cut more of his flesh and put it on one side of the scale, the pigeon continued to outweigh the king's flesh. Unfazed, Uṣīnara continued to have his limbs cut off and placed in the scale. Impressed by his courage and determination in saving those to whom he gave Ṣaraṇu, Indra and Agni assumed their true forms and gave the king many boons. *Hari Vamṣa*

**Uṣīnara II** – A king of the Vṛshṭi dynasty. *Bhāgavata*

**Utathya** – Brother of Bṛhaspati (*Guru of the Dēvas*). His wife was named Mamata. Dīrghatama was the name of his son. Utathya's wife was raped by Bṛhaspati. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Utkala I** – Son of Ila, daughter of Vāyu (*the Wind God*) and King Dhruva. He was a sincere devotee of God. His constant trance-like devotion was mistaken for lunacy and Vatsara, son of Bhrama (*another wife of Dhruva*), was crowned king. *Bhāgavata*

**Utkala II** – Son of King Sudyumna. *Bhāgavata*

**Utpalāvati I** – An Apsara*. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Utpalāvati II** – Daughter of Dhṛḍhadhanva. One day, as two deer were about to make love, she scared the doe, who then ran away. The male deer, which was actually a shape-shifting man named Sutapa, assumed human form and said to her, "you interfered with my pleasure; marry me or I will give you a Ṣāpa*." When she refused to marry him, he gave her a Ṣāpa that she would be a doe. Saddened, she said to him, "Sir, do you not know? A girl has to be given in marriage by her parents. How can she give herself? Please provide me release from the Ṣāpa!" He told her "You will become

a doe, not in this life but in a future one. You will have knowledge of the previous life. A great Muni named Lōla will be in your womb. You will have human speech. When you give birth, you will be released from the Ṣāpa." Utpalāvati was married to a king named Surāshṭra. She died before her husband, and in accordance with the Ṣāpa, became a doe and was wandering in the forest. Surāshṭra lost his kingdom and was also wandering in the forest. One night, while trying to cross a stream, he saw the doe and grabbed her tail to help him swim. As he reached for her, he happened to touch her behind with his hand. The doe became pregnant as a result. The doe, in a human voice, asked him why he touched her, with desire, in an improper spot. Surāshṭra, surprised to hear a doe speak like a human, asked her how she could speak. She narrated her past life story. She gave birth to a boy. All the Munis came, saw the boy and named him Tāmasa. He later became Tāmasa Manu*. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Uttama I** – Third Manu*. Son of Priyavrata. His sons included Pavana, Sṛnjaya and Yagjnahōtra. During his Manvantara (*reign as Manu*), one named Satyajit was Indra*, sons of Vasishṭha incuding Pramadha were the Saptarshis*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Uttama II** – Son of King Uttānapāda and his wife Suruchi. Dhruva was his step-brother. As Uttānapāda was more fond of Suruchi than of his other wives, he also favoured Uttama over his other sons. Uttānapāda crowned him as his successor.

Uttama married a beautiful woman named Bahuḷa. While Uttama did love Bahuḷa, she was indifferent towards him. One day, when Uttama offered her some wine, she insulted him by rejecting it in front of everyone. Uttama, angered by her behaviour, ordered her

to be expelled to the forest. She felt relieved and went there willingly.

Some time later, a Brahmin named Suṣarma came to Uttama's Sabha (*court*) and said "O king! Someone abducted my wife. Please come, rescue her, and give her back to me." The king asked him what she looked like. Suṣarma told him that she was short, dark, old and ugly. Uttama said, "Why worry about losing such a wife? Marry someone else." The Brahmin replied that one must protect one's wife, regardless of her appearance. Uttama mounted his chariot and rode into the forest to look for the woman. He went to the Āṣram of a Muni who was a Trikālagjna (*knew the past, present and future*). The Muni asked one of his disciples to bring Arghya (*a respectful offering of water to a God or a venerable person*) for the king. Instead of bringing Arghya, the disciple asked the Muni to think well before giving him such an order. Realizing that the king, being in effect unmarried, was not eligible to receive Arghya, the Muni asked the king for the purpose of his visit. Learning of the kidnapping of Suṣarma's wife, he discerned by his Divya Dṛshṭi* that an Asura* named Balāka had abducted Suṣarma's wife, and so informed the king. Uttama asked the Muni why he was not offered Arghya. The Muni told Uttama that he was ineligible to receive Arghya since he did not have a wife. The king then went to Balāka's place and saw a Brahmin woman there. The woman told the king that the Asura, after abducting her, neither ate her nor had sex with her but just hid her. Puzzled by the Asura's behaviour and curious as to his motivation, the king approached the Asura. The Asura welcomed the king and explained that he abducted and hid Suṣarma's wife because Suṣarma was planning

on performing Yāgas for the purpose of destroying Asuras but he would not be eligible to perform any religious rites or Yāgas if he did not have a wife. The Asura told Uttama that if the king ordered him, he would return the Brahmin's wife. He also promised the king that whenever the king 'thought of"* him, he would come and do any task the king wished for. On Uttama's order, the Asura returned the abducted woman to her husband's house. Uttama went from there back to the Muni's Āṣram and asked him where his own wife Bahuḷa was then. The Muni told him that she had been abducted by a Nāga* king named Sālapōtaka, and is being protected by his daughter Nanda. Uttama summoned Balāka (*by 'thinking of' him*) and told him where his wife was and asked the Asura to bring her to him. Balāka did as Uttama asked. Suṣarma also arrived and performed the necessary religious rites to purify her. Uttama and Bahuḷa lived happily together. They had a son named Uttama who became Uttama Manu*. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Uttama III** – Son of Uttama and Bahuḷa. He became a Manu*. During his Manvantara (*reign as Manu*), one named Suṣānti was Indra*. Sons of Vasishṭha including Sutējasa and Sutapa were the Saptarshis*. His Manvantara lasted seventy one Mahā Yugas (*a Maha Yuga comprises four Yugas, named Kṛta, Trēta, Dwāpara and Kali*). *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Uttamēja** – Son of Dṛshtadyumna (*brother of Draupadi*). Aṣvatthāma killed Uttamēja along with other Pānḍava warriors while they were asleep. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Uttānapāda** – Son of Ananta and Swāyambhu. His brother was Priyavrata. Uttānapāda had two wives, Sunīti (*also known as*

*Sūnṛta*) and Suruchi. A son Dhruva was born to Sunīti and a son named Uttama was born to Suruchi. Uttānapāda was more fond of his second wife Suruchi than his first wife. Once, while very young, Dhruva sat on his father's lap. Suruchi pulled him down and placed her son Uttama on his father's lap, saying only her son was eligible to sit there. Uttānapāda did not respond and by his silence, validated her claim. *Bhāgavata; Matsya Purāṇa*

**Uttara I** – Son of the king of Virāṭa. When the Pāṇḍavas were in the Virāṭa kingdom incognito, he was old enough to fight on the battlefield. (*Background: The Pāṇḍavas had to spend twelve years in the forest, followed by a year incognito in accordance with the terms of an agreement following Dharmarāja's loss to Ṣakuni in a crooked game of chance. If any one of them was exposed during the incognito year they would have to repeat the whole thirteen-year cycle. The Kaurava prince Duryōdhana, on the advice of his uncle Ṣakuni, never intended to let the Pāṇḍavas complete the thirteen-year cycle. As soon as the incognito period started, he sent spies to all the kingdoms in the empire to detect the presence of the Pāṇḍavas, force them out and send them into another cycle in banishment. The Pāṇḍavas, however, disguised themselves very well and were close to completing the year incognito without incident. Their main problem was King Virāṭa's brother-in-law Kīchaka. After triumphing in wars on behalf of his brother-in-law, Kīchaka returned to Virāṭanagar, and saw Draupadi disguised as a companion of his sister the queen. The promiscuous and arrogant Kīchaka desired Draupadi and was harassing her and was about to force his sister to order Draupadi to submit to him. The Pāṇḍavas had no option but to have Bhīma kill him. When*

*the spies reported that Kīchaka was killed by someone, the Kauravas were certain that only Bhīma could have killed someone as strong as Kīchaka. They decided that if they stole Virāṭa's cattle, the kingdom's most valuable asset, the Pāṇḍavas would be forced into the open to help Virāṭa and would fail the terms of their banishment*.) First, King Suṣarma of a nearby kingdom and friend of the Kauravas, attacked from the north and stole some of Virāṭa's cattle. King Virāṭa responded with most of his army, leaving Prince Uttara behind to guard the kingdom. Immediately thereafter, cowherds came to the palace and reported that there was an attack from the south and the rest of the kingdom's cattle were stolen. Prince Uttara, bragging in front of the palace ladies that he would defeat all the attackers easily, lamented that he could not do anything because he lacked a driver for his chariot. Draupadi, hearing this, told him that Bṛhannala can drive a chariot and suggested that the prince take him and go to the battlefield. Bṛhannala drove the chariot to the battlefield. When Uttara saw great warriors such as Bhīshma, he was terrified. Admitting that he cannot fight, he begged Bṛhannala to turn the chariot around and go back. Bṛhannala did not comply with Uttara's request. Uttara jumped out of the chariot and started to run home. Bṛhannala (*Arjuna*) then dismounted from the chariot, caught up to Uttara and asked him to drive the chariot so that he, Bṛhannala can fight the enemy. Arjuna also showed Uttara the bow Gāṇḍīva he had hidden on the Ṣami tree and asked him to climb the tree and bring it down. The bow appeared like a dead body to Uttara and he was scared to approach it. Arjuna explained that it is the bow called Gāṇḍīva and described how the Pāṇḍavas hid their weapons

before starting their year of being incognito. Uttara could not grasp even then that Bṛhannala was, in fact Arjuna. Arjuna had to spell it out for him. Once Uttara understood that he was in the presence of the great warrior Arjuna, he lost his fear and drove the chariot to face the Kaurava warriors. Before starting the battle, Arjuna blew his famous conch (*each great warrior had a conch with a distinct sound, which they used to announce their arrival on the battlefield*), Dēvadatta. Uttara fainted on hearing the mighty conch. Arjuna put his unconscious body in the chariot and proceeding to where the Kaurava warriors were, fought and defeated them. When they returned to the city, Uttara, knowing that Bṛhannala and the others that came to his father's Sabha (*court*) at the same time were the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadi, treated them with respect and devotion. *Mahā Bhārata*

Uttara's daughter Irāvati was given in marriage to Parīkshit (*son of his brother-in-law Abhimanyu*). *Bhāgavata*

**Uttara II** – Daughter of the king of Virāṭa. Arjuna, as the eunuch Bṛhannala (*due to Ūrvaṣi's Ṣāpa**) taught her dance and other fine arts during the year Arjuna and the other Pāṇḍavas were spending incognito after twelve years in the forest. She was given in marriage to Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna. Her husband was killed in the Mahā Bhārata war while she was pregnant, shortly after getting married. Aṣvatthāma's weapon Brahmaṣira attacked the unborn child in her womb. She prayed to Lord Kṛshṇa who saved the unborn child. Her son was Parīkshit. *Mahā Bhārata*

# – V –

**Vadānya** – A Muni. He had a daughter named Suprabha. A man named Ashṭāvakra (*literally, twisted eight ways*) came to him and requested his daughter's hand in marriage. Vadānya asked Ashṭāvakra to travel to the North and return. He then asked the North (*direction, personified*) to take the form of a beautiful young woman and seduce Ashṭāvakra, to test his resolve to marry his daughter. Ashṭāvakra passed the test (*refused to be seduced*), returned and married Suprabha. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Vadhūsari** – A river. Once upon a time, when an Asura* was carrying away Sage Bhṛgu's wife Pulōma from the Sage's Āṣram, she cried helplessly. Pulōma's tears flowed as a stream. That stream was Vadhūsari. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vaikunṭha** – In the Manvantara (*epoch, reign as Manu**) of Raivata Manu, Lord Vishṇu took birth as the son of Vikunṭha and her husband Ṣubhra. He built the world called Vaikunṭha. *Bhāgavata*

**Vaiṣampāyana** – A Muni. A disciple of Vēda Vyāsa. In the beginning, the Vēdas were all mixed together and not codified. Vaiṣampāyana, under the direction of Vyāsa, divided them into

four separate units and established Vēdic Sūtras (*principles and rules*). He studied the Yajur Vēda in detail. Vyāsa sent Vaiṣampāyana to earth to narrate the story of the Mahā Bhārata to the Emperor Janamējaya (*great-grandson of Arjuna*). He told many stories from the Purāṇas to Ugraṣravasa. *Mahā Bhārata*

One day, Vaiṣampāyana was instructing his disciples in reciting Mantras based on praising Indravajra (*Indra's* weapon, the thunderbolt, made of vajra or diamond*). A Brahmin boy suddenly walked between Vaiṣampāyana and his disciples. Vaiṣampāyana tried to alert the boy to get out of their way, using hand gestures. As the Mantras sounded from his lips, the Darbhas (*dried, holy grass leaves*) turned into diamonds by the power of the Mantras and killed the boy. The sin of Brahma Hatya (*Sanskrit for 'murder of a Brahmin', considered the most heinous of sins*), attached to Vaiṣampāyana as a result of the accident. He cleansed himself of this grave sin by performing Tapas*. Vaiṣampāyana learnt the Purāṇas from Rōmaharshaṇa, one of the primary disciples of Vyāsa, and propagated them throughout the world. *Bhāgavata*

Once, some Munis went to the Mēru mountain (*reputed in Purāṇic times to be the tallest mountain in the world*) and issued a proclamation that all Munis must gather there within seven days and that any Muni who fails to come will be guilty of the sin of Brahma Hatya. Vaiṣampāyana ignored the edict and did not go. The sin of Brahma Hatya attached to him. Unable to bear the burden of the grave sin, he summoned his disciples and asked if one of them will accept his sin and relieve him. One of them, Yāgjnavalkya said "O! Guru1 How bad can it be? I will accept it and rid myself of it using my knowledge." Vaiṣampāyana was infuriated by these

words and said "How arrogantly did you speak! You are unfit to stay here. Go away. All the knowledge I imparted to you shall return to me." Yāgjnavalkya thereupon threw up everything he had learnt from Vaiṣampāyana and went away. Yāgjnavalkya later prayed to Sūrya (*the Sun God*) and was instructed in the Yajur Vēda again. *Brahma Purāṇa*

**Vaiṣvānara** – Son of Kaṣyapa and his wife Danu. He had daughters named Kālaka and Paulōma. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Vaiṣya** – Wife of Dhṛtarāshṭra (*a Ṣūdra* woman whom Dhṛtarāshṭra married in addition to Gāndhāri and all her sisters*) and mother of Yuyutsu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vaitāḷa** – Disciple of Sage Jātukarṇi. *Bhāgavata*

**Vaivasvata** – Son of Vivasvanta (*another name of Sūrya, the Sun God*) and his wife Sangjna. His given name was Ṣrāddha Dēva. He became the seventh Manu*. During his Manvantara (*reign as Manu*), the position of Indra* was held by Ōjasvi. The Saptarshis* were Atri, Vasishṭha, Kāṣyapa, Gautama, Bharadvāja, Viṣvāmitra, and Jamadagni. Vaivasvata and his wife Ṣraddha had sons named Ikshvāku, Nābhāga, Dṛshṭa, Samyāti, Karusha, Vṛshadra, Vasumanta, Narishyanta, and Vṛshapada. Before these sons were born, Vaivasvata performed a Yāga devoted to the Mitrāvaruṇas, wishing for a son. His wife, though, wishing for a daughter, sought the help of the priest. The priest used Mantras intended for begetting a daughter instead of those meant for a son. Accordingly, a daughter, Ila, was born to Vaivasvata and his wife. Vaivasvata visited the royal family Guru, Vasishṭha, and asked how a daughter was born through a Yāga performed in order to beget a son.

Vasishṭha informed Vaivasvata of the switching of Mantras by the priest, and using his spiritual power, requested Lord Vishṇu to change Vaivasvata's daughter into a boy. Vishṇu acceded to the Sage's request and transformed Ila into a boy, who was given the name Sudyumna.

Sudyumna grew up to be a valiant young man and was ruling the kingdom on his father's behalf. One day, accompanied by several men in his retinue, he went into the forest for a hunt, all of them riding stallions. Riding a long way, the hunting party entered an enchanted forest named Kumāra Vana (*a spell was put on the forest by Lord Ṣiva that any male creatures entering the forest will be transformed into females*). All the men instantly became women and the stallions they rode became mares.

After giving birth to a son, Purūrava, by Budha*, Ila 'thought of'* the Sage Vasishṭha and begged him to seek the required divine intervention to allow herself to be transformed back into male form as Sudyumna. Since it was a spell put on the forest by Ṣiva that caused the sex change, Vasishṭha prayed to Ṣiva. Ṣiva appeared and in response to Vasishṭha's plea on behalf of Ila/Sudyumna, granted a compromise solution that Ila/Sudyumna will spend alternate months as male and female.

Vaivasvata, after ruling as king for a long time, handed the kingdom over to his sons and moved to the forest to perform Tapas*. Lord Brahma, pleased by his Tapas, appeared to him and asked him to choose a boon. He requested that he shall have the power to protect animals and immovable objects during a Praḷaya (*world-ending deluge*). Once, while he had holy water in his joined palms during the evening ritual of Arghya, a fish fell into

his hands (see **Matsya**). *Bhāgavata*

**Vājaṣravasa** – Father of Nāchikēta. He was donating all his cows to Brahmins. Seeing this, Nāchikēta asked his father "Father! To whom will you give me away?" Vājaṣravasa did not hear his son's question. Nāchikēta kept repeating the question. Annoyed, Vājaṣravasa said "I will give you to Yama (*the God of Death*)!" Nāchikēta went to Yama's Sabha (*court*) and with Yama's blessing, returned home. *Kaṭhōpanishad*

**Vajra** – Son of Aniruddha (*grandson of Lord Kṛshṇa*) and Usha. The Yādava dynasty made him king of Indraprastha. *Aniruddha Charitra*

**Vajrabāhu** – King of country named Dāṣārṇa. The eldest of his wives was Sumati. While she was pregnant, the younger wives of Vajrabāhu drugged Sumati. As a result, both she and the son born to her were sickly. Tired of their constant crying, Vajrabāhu banished them to the forest. The name of the son was Bhadrāyu. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Vajradamshṭra** – One of the advisors of Rāvaṇa. He counseled against peace with Rāma and in favour of war. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Vajradatta** – Son of the Asura* Bhagadatta (*son of Naraka, whose death at the hands of Lord Kṛshṇa is celebrated as Diwali*). A sworn enemy of the Pānḍavas, he captured the sacrificial horse during Dharmarāja's Aṣvamēdha Yāga*, but was defeated by Arjuna. *Bhāgavata*

**Vajrajwāla** – Daughter of Vairōchana and wife of Kumbhakarṇa (*younger brother of Rāvaṇa*)… *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Vajramitra** – Son of King Ghōsha and father of Bhāgavata. *Bhāgavata*

**Vajranābha I** – An Asura*. He ruled the city of Vajra. He performed Tapas directed towards Lord Brahma and obtained from Him a boon of invincibility against the Dēvas. No one could enter the city of Vajra without his permission. With the confidence in his boon, he was harassing Indra* and the Dēvas, pestering Indra to abdicate his control of Swarga (*heaven*) and let him become Lord of Swarga. Lacking the courage to fight him, Indra proposed that he will do whatever Sage Kaṣyapa (*father of both Dēvas and Asuras*) advises. Vajranābha agreed to abide by the proposal. Indra secretly begged Kṛshṇa to kill Vajranābha.

Vajranābha had a daughter named Prabhāvati. She fell in love with Kṛshṇa's son Pradyumna. A (*articulate*) female swan named Ṣuchimukhi who was acting as an intermediary between the lovers described to Vajranābha very enticingly the talents of an actor named Bhadra. Once Vajranābha was persuaded to witness the performance of Bhadra, Ṣuchimukhi brought Pradyumna to Vajranābha's city in the guise of the actor Bhadra. After entering the city, Pradyumna managed to sneak into the private quarters of Prabhāvati and married her. Prabhāvati gave birth to a son by Pradyumna. Learning of this turn of events, Vajranābha sent an army to kill Pradyumna. Pradyumna, with assistance from Indra and the Dēvas, fought Vajranābha and killed him. *Bhāgavata*

**Vajranābha II** – Son of Chala and father of Ṣankhanakha. *Bhāgavata*

**Vajrānga** – Son of Diti and Sage Kaṣyapa. He was born to Diti

(*mother of Asuras**) after the Maruts. His wife was Varāngi. He, just like other Asuras, was harassing the Dēvas. His son was Tārakāsura. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Vajrāyudha** – Indra's* signature weapon (*thunderbolt; literally, 'diamond weapon'*). Once upon a time, when an Asura named Vṛtra was harassing Indra and the Dēvas, they went to Lord Vishṇu and pleaded for His help. Vishṇu told them "Go and pray to Sage Dadhīchi and make a weapon with one of his bones. You will be able to kill Vṛtra with that weapon." Viṣvakarma* fashioned a mighty weapon from a bone of Dadhīchi. Indra killed Vṛtra using the weapon, which came to be known as Vajrāyudha. *Bhāgavata*

**Vālakhilyas** – Sons of Lord Brahma. Brahma attended the wedding of Lord Ṣiva with Pārvati. Seeing the couple during the wedding, Brahma experienced spontaneous ejaculation. Vālakhilyas were born from that semen.

Once Brahma went to Indra* Lōka (*Indra's world*). Rambha and other Apsaras* went forward to welcome Him. Their sight made Brahma ejaculate. Embarrassed, he covered the semen with his foot. Grains of sand mixed with the semen and Vālakhilyas were born from the mixture. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

Vālakhilyas were the sons of a Muni named Kratu and his wife Sannati. The Vālakhilyas never married and had their senses under total control. They used to travel in Sūrya's chariot. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

Vālakhilyas had bodies the size of a thumb. They used to hang upside down on trees while performing Tapas*. When Kaṣyapa was performing the Putra Kāmēshṭi Yāga*, they were helping gather flowers. They started to shiver, unable to bear the weight of

the flowers. Indra laughed derisively at their plight. They felt humiliated and angry. They foretold that the son born to Kaṣyapa would be another Indra (*generic term for chief among members of a group or type*). Indra was worried that he would lose his position. Knowing that the Vālakhilyas were infallible, Kaṣyapa amended the Vālakhilyas' prophecy with their consent by saying the son born to him as a result of the Yāga will be Khagēndra (*chief of birds*). Indra was relieved that his position was not threatened. (*The Khagēndra born thus was Garutmanta**, *Lord Vishṇu's transport*) *Mahā Bhārata*

**Valala** – The pseudonym adopted by Bhīma during the the year the Pānḍavas had to remain incognito. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vāli** – A Vānara*. Once upon a time, while a male Vānara named Ṛkshaviraja was in female form, Indra* saw her and was sexually aroused. Indra's semen fell on Ṛkshaviraja's Vāla (*tail*). The son born from that semen was named Vāli. Vāli's younger brother was Sugrīva (*born from Sūrya's semen that fell on Ṛkshaviraja's throat while he was female*). *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

Indra's son by Ahalya. Once, while Sage Gautama was away, Indra and Sūrya had sex with his wife Ahalya. Two sons were born to her. Gautama assumed they were his sons. Anjana (*daughter of Ahalya and Gautama*) told him that they were not his. He then declared "If you are not my sons, you will turn into monkeys but you will remain human if I am your father". As they became Vānaras, Gautama abandoned them. Ṛkshaviraja was walking along the seashore at the time and came across the two abandoned boys. He adopted and raised them. The two sons of Ahalya who became Vānaras were Vāli and Sugrīva. Ṛkshaviraja

crowned Vāli king of Kishkindha. *Vichitra Rāmāyaṇa*

Vāli's wife was Tāra. They had a son named Angada. Vāli was very strong physically. No one was ever able to fight him and win. Rāvaṇa, puffed up after a triumphant tour of various kingdoms whose kings he had defeated, challenged Vāli to a fight. Vāli not only defeated him but almost killed him. Since then, Rāvaṇa became friends with Vāli. An Asura* named Dundubhi challenged Vāli. The two fought outside the city. Vāli killed Dundubhi. He then lifted the corpse and threw it on the ground. Some of Dundubhi's blood spilled on to nearby Ṛṣyamūka mountain. Sage Matanga who was on the mountain at the time gave Vāli a Ṣāpa* that his head would explode if he ever set foot on Ṛṣyamūka mountain. The Ṣāpa forced Vāli to stay well away from Ṛṣyamūka.

Another Asura, Māyāvi, challenged Vāli to a fight. After losing to Vāli, he hid in a cave. Vāli followed him into the cave and killed him there after a long fight. Vāli's younger brother Sugrīva who was outside the cave, saw streams of blood coming out of the cave. Assuming Vāli had died, Sugrīva blocked the cave entrance with a rock and returned to the city. Vāli, eventually coming out of the cave, found his brother now married to his wife Tāra, and ruling his kingdom. Assuming that Sugrīva closed the cave knowing that his brother was alive inside in order to steal his wife and kingdom, Vāli beat his brother up and drove him from the kingdom. A bitter feud between Vāli and Sugrīva started as a result.

It was after the start of the feud between the brothers that Sugrīva befriended Rāma. Sugrīva requested Rāma to kill Vāli. Sugrīva challenged Vāli and was going through the motions of

fighting him. Rāma, hiding behind a tree, shot an arrow at Vāli and killed him.

No one, not even Rāma, could fight Vāli while facing him, and win. Vāli had a boon that anyone facing him would lose half his strength, which would then accrue to Vāli. That boon was the reason Vāli had been able to defeat so many great warriors.

Vāli was upset at being hit by deceit. The fact was if Rāma had sought his help instead of his brother's, Rāma's mission would have been accomplished easily. However, Vāli died happy, saluting Rāma with a Namaskāra* because he knew of Rāma's divinity. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Vālmīki I** – Son of Varuṇa (*God of Rain*) and his wife Charshiṇi. *Bhāgavata*

**Vālmīki II** – (*Son of Prachētasa*) Once Brahma went to Indra* Lōka (*Indra's world*). Rambha and other Apsaras* went forward along with Indra to welcome Him. The sight of the beautiful Apsaras made Brahma ejaculate. Embarrassed, he covered the semen with his foot. Some mud got mixed with the semen. Vālmīki was born from it. Vālmīki once went up to face Brahma and said "I was born from your semen mixed with mud when you were visiting Indra's Sabha (*court*). Provide my sustenance." Upset that Vālmīki revealed his guilty secret, Brahma gave him a Ṣāpa* that he will become a lowly person, join a group of hunters and indulge in cruel activities. Vālmīki then prayed to Brahma and begged for release from His Ṣāpa. Brahma told him "You will be released from the Ṣāpa when you chant the name of Rāma."

As a result of the Ṣāpa, Vālmīki became an untouchable, and joining a tribe of hunters, married a tribal woman. He started

committing highway robbery and supporting his family with the proceeds of his crimes. One day, he accosted the Saptarshis* and tried to steal their Kamanḍalas*. The Sages said to him "Did you ever consider whether your wife and children will be willing to share your sins as well as the money you obtain from your crimes? Go find out. We will wait here until you return." Vālmīki went and asked his wife. She replied "It is your duty to support us. Any sin or good fate that results from the means you use to earn the resources to support us are exclusively yours. We have no responsibility for that." With his illusions shattered, Vālmīki returned to the Sages and begged them to teach him how to avoid the consequences of his past sins. They taught him to chant the name of Rāma. But, aware that he was ineligible to chant the name of Rāma, they taught him to chant Marā. Vālmīki immediately started Tapas*, chanting the name as he was taught. He continued the chanting for many years, while starving. Eventually, he was covered by ant-hills, and trees grew on top of them.

Sage Nārada came to know that Lord Vishṇu will be born as Rāma. Vishṇu, however, asked the Sage to not reveal the information to anyone. Unable to keep from revealing the secret only he knew, Nārada decided that telling trees when no one was around does not constitute violation of his promise to Vishṇu. He spoke the story of Rāma standing in front of the trees on the ant-hills covering Vālmīki. Vālmīki heard the secret.

Vālmīki had several disciples. Once, returning after bathing in the river accompanied by his disciples, he saw a hunter killing one of a couple of curlews. Vālmīki gave him a Ṣāpa saying to him "Your fame will come to an end now." The words he said to the

hunter became a Ṣlōka (*Sanskrit poem*) in perfect meter, which was a concise version of the Rāmāyaṇa. Vālmīki, astonished at the transformation of a simple statement, returned to his Āṣram with his disciples. Soon thereafter, Brahma visited Vālmīki and instructed him to compose the Rāmāyaṇa.

Once, Vālmīki's disciples informed him that an incomparably beautiful pregnant lady was wandering in the forest. Vālmīki, using his Divya Dṛshṭi*, divined that she was Sīta (*Lord Rāma's Consort*). He went and greeted her with respect and brought her to his Āṣram. After she delivered twins, he gave them the names Kuṣa and Lava and educated them. When Rāma performed the Aṣvamēdha Yāga*, Vālmīki attended along with the twin boys. At the Yāga, he had the boys sing the Rāmāyaṇa (*the boys did not know of their and their mother's relationship to Rāma, that is, they did not know their mother was the Sīta of whom they were singing*). Rāma, hearing the story, was saddened by His loss of Sīta. Vālmīki informed Him that Sīta had been his guest at his Āṣram and suggested that Rāma send for her. Sīta was brought home. Forced to prove Her purity and virtue again, She chose to go back to Her mother, the earth. Rāma was plunged into sadness again. Vālmīki comforted Him and advised Him to complete the Yāga. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Vāmadēva I** – A Muni. He was the priest in King Daṣaratha's Sabha (*court*). He taught Dharma (*righteousness*) to King Vasumanu. His message was that achieving Dharma is superior to amassing wealth. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vāmadēva II** – A Brahmin. He owned some very fast horses. A king named Ṣala once borrowed his horses and refused to return

them when Vāmadēva himself went and requested their return. Instead, the king actually attempted to kill the Brahmin. Vāmadēva, using his spiritual power acquired by Tapas*, created Asuras* and had them kill the king. After the death of Ṣala, his brother Dala ascended the throne. Vāmadēva sent a disciple of his, Ātrēya, to Dala to request that his horses be returned to him, with the same result. Vāmadēva himself again went to see Dala to get his horses back. Angered by what he considered the Brahmin's arrogance, the king vowed he would kill Vāmadēva and sent his servants to bring a poison-tipped arrow. Vāmadēva told him that the very arrow with which Dala wanted to kill him was, at that instant, killing Dala's son who was in the palace. Even as Vāmadēva was speaking, the women of the family came to the king, wailing and carrying his son's corpse. Still bent on killing the Brahmin, Dala tried to raise his bow. His arms were paralyzed by Vāmadēva's spiritual power. Dala, humiliated and finally understanding that the power of the Brahmin was great, prayed to Vāmadēva and begged his forgiveness. Vāmadēva restored the functionality of Dala's arms and also revived his son. Dala finally returned Vāmadēva's horses to him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vāmana** – Son of Kaṣyapa and his wife Aditi. Lord Vishṇu Himself was born as Vāmana (*His sixth and first human incarnation*) to fulfill a boon He granted to Kaṣyapa in his previous life. Vāmana was very short. After his Upanayanam*, he set about traveling as a mendicant and went to Emperor Bali (*an Asura* who was powerful but not evil; he was the grandson of Prahlāda, a devotee of Lord Vishṇu*).

Bali at the time was very powerful and was ruling all three

worlds (*the earth, heaven or Swarga and the netherworld or Pātāḷa*). The Dēvas had lost their power. Indra* was dethroned. Lord Vishṇu took birth as Vāmana to suppress the Asuras, in response to the pleas of the Dēvas.

Vāmana, in the form of a Brahmin boy, came to Bali. As was his wont, Bali promised to give him anything he wished for. Vāmana said all he wanted was three feet of land. Ṣukra, the Guru of the Asuras, realized through his spiritual power that the boy was, in fact, Vishṇu, come to suppress the powerful Bali. He advised Bali not to give Vāmana his wish, sensing that the gift Vāmana wanted would be the means by which Bali would be neutralized. Bali refused to break his promise. When Bali was about to give Vāmana the three feet of land and signifying the donation with holy water, Ṣukra assumed the form of an insect and lodged himself in the spout of the Kamanḍala* to prevent the donation. Vāmana, realizing Ṣukra's attempt to save Bali from Him, used a blade of Darbha (*sharp sacred grass*) to clear the spout. Ṣukra became blind in one eye as a result of being poked with the Darbha. Vāmana then transformed Himself into a giant, assuming His Viṣvarūpa (*His shape as the Universe*). He covered the earth with one of His feet and the sky with the other. There was no place remaining to measure the third foot He was promised. Bali hung his head indicating it as the place for the third foot. Vāmana placed His foot on Bali's head and pushed him down all the way to the netherworld. *Bhāgavata*

**Vamri** – An insect. Once, while Lord Vishṇu was sleeping with His head resting on a strung bow, this insect, following the orders of Lord Brahma, chewed on the bow string and broke it. The broken

string whipped out and decapitated Vishṇu. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Vanāyu** – The son born to Purūrava and the Apsara* Ūrvaṣi. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vanda** – an Apsara*. Apsaras named Saurabhēyi, Samīchi, Budbuda and Lata were her companions. Once, she and her friends went to earth, saw a Brahmin performing Tapas* and heckled him with the intent to disrupt his Tapas. The Brahmin gave them a Ṣāpa* that they would turn into crocodiles. When they pleaded with him to release them from the Ṣāpa, he told them that they will be released when they are thrown out of the water. They encountered Sage Nārada while on their way to the lakes to start the sentence imposed by the Ṣāpa and related the story to him. He revealed to them the manner of their release from the Ṣāpa, that Arjuna on his pilgrimage would be their emancipator. The bodies of water where these crocodiles lived were referred to as Nārī Tīrthas* (*Nārī is Sanskrit for woman*). Arjuna, during his tour of pilgrimage was bathing in the pond where Lata was a crocodile. When the crocodile grabbed hold of his leg, he pulled it out of the water and threw it on the ground. Vanda and her companions were then released from the Ṣāpa and regained their former bodies. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vandi** – Son of Varuṇa (*the God of Rain*). He used to sit in the Sabha (*court*) of King Janaka, challenge anyone there to an argument and drown the losers. Ashṭāvakra finally defeated him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vapu** – An Apsara*. One day, while the Apsaras were performing dance in Indra's* Sabha (*court*), the question arose among them,

of who is the best dancer. Indra told them that Sage Nārada was qualified to judge who was best. Nārada told them that the one who can distract Sage Durvāsa by arousing him sexually by her dance is the greatest dancer. Vapu, saying she is capable of achieving success, went to where Durvāsa was performing Tapas* and began to sing. Realizing that she came with the aim of disturbing his Tapas, Durvāsa gave her a Ṣāpa*, saying "Become a bird and live on earth. You will have sons. When you are hit by a sword, you will be released from this Ṣāpa and return to Swarga (*heaven*)." She turned into a bird named Tārkshi. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Vapushmanta** –King of the Island of Ṣālmali. Son of Priyavrata and father of Ṣwēta, Harīta, Jīmūta, Vaidyuta, Rōhita, Mānasa, and Suprabhu. *Brahma Purāṇa*

**Vapushṭa** – Daughter of the king of Kāṣi*. She married Janamējaya (*great-grandson of Arjuna*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Varadāna** – A place of pilgrimage. It was here that Lord Vishṇu appeared to Sage Durvāsa and gave him a boon. The place got its name as a result (*in Sanskrit, Vara means 'boon'; Dāna means 'giving'*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Varāha Avatāra** – Once upon a time, an Asura* named Hiraṇyāksha rolled up the earth like a mattress and threw it into the ocean. Lord Vishṇu assumed an incarnation as a Varāha (*wild boar, His third*), killed Hiraṇyāksha and restored earth to her rightful place. The Varāha, intoxicated after drinking Hiraṇyāksha's blood, went on a rampage, causing terror in all the worlds. Lord Brahma and the Dēvas pleaded with Lord Ṣiva for help. Ṣiva assumed the

form of a huge elephant and broke the Varāha's horns. *Bhāgavata; Skānda Purāṇa*

**Varāha Kalpa** – An epoch (*each cycle of Yugas, called a Kalpa, consists of Kṛta, Trēta, Dwāpara and Kali; it is currently Kali Yuga in this Kalpa*). Once upon a time, the earth sank into Rasātala (*a netherworld*). Lord Vishṇu took an incarnation as a Varāha (*a wild boar*) and lifted her back to position. The epoch named Varāha Kalpa began at that time. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Varāha Tīrtha** – A place of pilgrimage. It was here that Lord Vishṇu took the Varāha incarnation. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Varamitra** – A Brahmin. He had a friend named Sārasvata. His son was Sumēdha. *Skānda Purāṇa; Brahma Purāṇa*

**Varāngi I** – Wife of Vajrānga. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Varāngi II** – Wife of Samyāti and mother of Ahamyāti. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vararuchi** – A Brahmin. In a previous life, he was a Yaksha (*semi-divine beings, known for their musical prowess*) named Pushpadanta. He was born to poor Brahmin parents as a result of a Ṣāpa* by Goddess Pārvati. Vararuchi was also known by the name Kātyāyana. He was a genius, capable of grasping any thing by just listening to it once. While he was still a child, two other boys, Vyāli and Indradatta, with his mother's permission, took him to a teacher named Varsha. Vararuchi learnt every thing from Varsha. Varsha's brother Upavarsha gave his daughter Upakōṣa in marriage to Vararuchi. Vararuchi was the most advanced disciple of Varsha. However, another disciple named Pāṇini (*who later formulated*

*Sanskrit grammar*), prayed to Lord Ṣiva and defeated Vararuchi in scholarly arguments by the grace of Ṣiva. A scholar named Patanjali wrote commentaries to explain the rules of grammar formulated by Pāṇini. One of the commentaries was named Phakki. It was believed that Vararuchi drew a line around that commentary to signify that no one other than Patanjali understood it. Vararuchi served for some time as a minister in the Sabha (*court*) of King Yōgananda. *Kathāsaritsāgara*

**Varchas** – Son of Vasu named Sōma. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Varsha** – Wife of Marīchi. She had six sons who laughed in scorn at Lord Brahma when they saw Him making love to His daughter Sarasvati. Brahma gave them a Ṣāpa* that they would be born as Asuras*. *Bhāgavata*

**Vārshṇēya** – Chariot-driver for King Nala. When Nala and Damayanti left for the forest after Nala lost his kingdom, Vārshṇēya was the one who took their son and daughter to the home of Damayanti's father. Later, he also joined the staff of King Ṛtuparṇa and worked alongside Bāhuka (*Nala in disguise*) but did not recognise his true identity. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Varūdhini** – A Gandharva* woman. A Gandharva man was in love with her, but she did not reciprocate. Instead, she fell madly in love with a strikingly handsome Brahmin young man she saw walking on the slopes of the Himālaya mountain. When the man approached her seeking directions to his home town, she spoke in double entendres, hinting at her desire for him. Then, she openly professed her love for him. When she tried to embrace him, the man, whose name was Pravarākhya, pushed her aside and went on

his way. She was disheartened and stood there, pining for him. All the while, the Gandharva who loved her was watching this drama unfold. The Gandharva assumed the form of Pravarākhya (*one of the powers of Gandharvas is shape-shifting*) and stood in the lake nearby. Believing him to be Pravarākhya, Varūdhini was ecstatic, especially when the fake Pravarākhya seemed eager to have sex with her. He asked her to keep her eyes closed during sex, to avoid being recognised. Varūdhini became pregnant and a son named Svarōchi was born to her. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Varuṇa** – Dikpālaka* of the West. Ruler of the oceans (*and God of Rain*). He was one of the sons of Kaṣyapa Prajāpati*. He was originally named Ṣuchishmanta. Once, while Ṣuchishmanta was playing in a lake named Acchōda with his friends, a crocodile swallowed him and took him to Samudra (*the God of Oceans*). His friends reported to Kaṣyapa that a crocodile swallowed his son. Kaṣyapa, unperturbed, continued his Tapas*. Just then, one of Lord Ṣiva's attendants visited Samudra and exclaimed "Why have you abducted Kaṣyapa's son? Is this appropriate?" Afraid of retaliation, Samudra sent Ṣuchishmanta to Lord Ṣiva. Ṣiva sent him back to Kaṣyapa. Only then did Kaṣyapa open his eyes and was happy to see his son safe and sound. On his father's advice, Ṣuchishmanta went to Kāṣi* and worshipped Lord Ṣiva by performing Tapas. Ṣiva appeared before him and asked him to choose a boon. Ṣuchishmanta requested and was given the position of Varuṇa. (*Kāṣi Khanḍa is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Kāṣi Khanḍa*

Once, Lord Brahma spontaneously ejaculated on seeing Rati, the beautiful wife of Manmatha (*the God of Love*). Ashamed of His

lack of control, he covered the semen with a cloth. Agni (*the God of Fire*) came and burned the cloth. Brahma doused the fire with water. Varuṇa was born from the water Brahma sprinkled on the fire. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

Varuṇa's wife was Ṣuna Dēvi. Vandi and Pushkara were their sons. *Vāyu Purāṇa; Mahā Bhārata*

One day, Varuṇa and Sūrya (*the Sun God*) were traveling together and happened to see the Apsara* Ūrvaṣi. On seeing her, they both ejaculated spontaneously. Ūrvaṣi saved the semen and kept it in a Kumbha (*pot*). Sages Agastya and Vasishṭha were born from the pot. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

Varuṇa once abducted Sage Uchathya's wife while Uchathya was bathing in the Yamuna river. Sage Nārada informed Uchathya of what Varuṇa had done. Uchathya sent Nārada himself to Varuṇa to convince him that it was an improper act for a Dikpālaka. Varuṇa did not heed Nārada's advice. Uchathya then went to Varuṇa's city, evaporated all the water and converted the city into a dust bowl. Varuṇa was terrified by Uchathya's power and returned his wife to him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vasishṭha** – Lord Brahma's mind-born son. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

One of the Saptarshis*. One day, Varuṇa and Sūrya (*the Sun God*) were traveling together and happened to see the Apsara* Ūrvaṣi. On seeing her, they both ejaculated spontaneously. Ūrvaṣi saved the semen and kept it in a Kumbha (*pot*). Sages Agastya and Vasishṭha were born from the pot. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

Vasishṭha married Arundhati. Arundhati was a great Pativrata*. The couple had several sons including Ṣakti, Sage Parāṣara (*father*

*of Sage Vyāsa, who codified the Vēdas and composed the Mahā Bhārata*), Sutapa and Sutējana. The last two were Saptarshis during the reign of Uttama as Manu*. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

Vasishṭha would normally be performing Tapas* in the forest. One day, King Viṣvāmitra, tired after a long hunt in the forest, stopped at Vasishṭha's Āṣram to rest. Vasishṭha, with the help of his Kāmadhēnu (*literally, a cow that provides whatever her owner wishes*), provided the king and his vast retinue dinner and other comforts fit for a king. Viṣvāmitra, surprised by the power of Vasishṭha's cow, wanted to take her away. Vasishṭha refused to part with the cow even though Viṣvāmitra offered one hundred thousand other cows in return (*the offer itself is arrogant and insulting because there was no limit to what the cow can give her owner, let alone a hundred thousand cows, which is why Viṣvāmitra coveted her*). When Viṣvāmitra tried to take her by force, a vast army emerged from the cow and drove Viṣvāmitra and his army away. From then on, Viṣvāmitra resented and hated Sage Vasishṭha. Realizing that Vasishṭha's great power was spiritual and derived from his constant Tapas, Viṣvāmitra became a Muni himself and performed intense Tapas. Becoming a Muni (*having given up his kingdom and all royal perks*), however, did not soften his attitude towards Vasishṭha. In fact, he used every opportunity that came along to do harm to Vasishṭha.

Once, Vasishṭha's son Ṣakti, and Kalmāshapāda (*who was at the time the victim of a Ṣāpa**) were involved in a dispute. Viṣvāmitra, noticing this, caused Kalmāshapāda's mind to be taken over by an Asura*. Under the influence of the Asura, Kalmāshapāda killed all of Vasishṭha's sons.

Devastated by the death of all his sons and losing the will to live, Vasishṭha decided to commit suicide. However, the spiritual power he had amassed by his Tapas, changed the fire he jumped into to a cool breeze. When he tried to drown in the ocean, Samudra (*the Ocean God*) pulled him to the shore. When he ascended to the top of a mountain and jumped off, he was not hurt. When he jumped into a river with his arms and feet bound, the ropes fell away and he found himself on the banks. Foiled in every effort to kill himself, he finally gave up and returned to his Āṣram. There he heard Vēdic Hymns emanating from the womb of his pregnant daughter-in-law. Thinking he would kill himself after he saw his grandson's face, he proceeded to guard his daughter-in-law through her pregnancy.

One day, Kalmāshapāda, turned into an Asura by a Ṣāpa, was chasing Vasishṭha's pregnant daughter-in-law. When Vasishṭha sprinkled holy water (*sanctified by the chanting of Mantras*) on him, he was released from his Ṣāpa.

Once, Vasishṭha was visiting Indra's Sabha (*court*) and mentioned that among the rulers of the earth, there was King Hariṣchandra who never lied or broke a promise. Viṣvāmitra immediately proclaimed that he would force Hariṣchandra to lie or break a promise, and proceeded to cause problems for the king. Learning of the harassment of King Hariṣchandra by Viṣvāmitra and remembering that it was Viṣvāmitra who was instrumental in the untimely death of his sons, Vasishṭha gave Viṣvāmitra a Ṣāpa that he would become a stork. Viṣvāmitra reciprocated by giving Vasishṭha a Ṣāpa turning him into a kingfisher. The two great Sages, in the form of birds, were constantly attacking each other.

Finally, Lord Brahma appeared to them, and released both of them from each other's Ṣāpa. He pacified Vasishṭha by revealing that the problems Hariṣchandra was subjected to by Viṣvāmitra actually benefited him.

Once, a king named Nimi planned to perform a Yāga and invited Vasishṭha to officiate as the Purōhit (*priest*). Vasishṭha replied that he will do so after he officiates at a Yāga being performed by Indra. Unwilling to postpone his Yāga until Vasishṭha's return from Indra's Yāga, Nimi invited Sage Gautama instead and completed his Yāga. Vasishṭha returned and finding the reward for officiating at the Yāga being received by Gautama, became furious at Nimi and gave him a Ṣāpa that he would be devoid of a physical body. Nimi reciprocated with an identical Ṣāpa to Vasishṭha. Bereft of his body, Vasishṭha prayed to Lord Brahma for release from the Ṣāpa. Brahma informed him that he will be reborn due to the actions of Varuṇa and Sūrya. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

Once, the Manu* Vaivasvata consulted with Vasishṭha on a Yāga which would enable him to beget a son. In accordance with the Sage's advice, he performed the Yāga with Mitra and Varuṇa as the benefactors. Unknown to the Manu, his wife requested the officiating priest to alter the Mantras in such a way that a daughter would be born to her instead of a son. A daughter was born as a result of the priest's alteration of the Yāga. A disappointed Vaivasvata asked Vasishṭha why a daughter was born instead of a son. Vasishṭha, having divined that the priest had deceived Vaivasvata, prayed to Lord Vishṇu and managed to turn the new-born girl into a boy. The boy was named Sudyumna.

Eventually, by entering a certain forest on which Lord Ṣiva had

placed a spell, Sudyumna became a woman again. After living for some time as a woman (*and giving birth to a son*), she requested Vasishṭha to help her regain manhood. Vasishṭha prayed to Lord Ṣiva who agreed to let Sudyumna alternate between male and female, each for one month.

One day, Vasishṭha went to the home of a king named Mitrasaha for dinner. Because of an Asura's mischief, a piece of human meat was in his food. Vasishṭha became angry and gave the king a Ṣāpa. The king, however was innocent. He was about to give a counter-Ṣāpa to Vasishṭha that he would be ineligible to be the priest of kings and held Mantra water in his hand, ready to sprinkle it on Vasishṭha. At that moment, Vasishṭha relized how human meat got into his dinner, using his Divya Dṛshṭi*. Mitrasaha then sprinkled the Mantra water on his own feet. Mitrasaha was under a Ṣāpa that he could not have sexual relations with his wife. He directed his wife to beget a Kshētraja* son by Sage Vasishṭha. She had a son named Aṣmaka in this manner. *Bhāgavata*

**Vasu I** – Son of Jamadagni (*of whom Paraṣurāma was another son*). His father ordered him to kill his mother. He refused and Jamadagni gave him a Ṣāpa*. Jamadagni released him from the Ṣāpa when Paraṣurāma requested him to do so after killing his mother. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vasu II** – Son of Kuṣa (*one of the twin sons of Lord Rāma*). He ruled the city of Girivrajapura. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Vasu III** – Son of Bhūtajyōti and father of Pratīta. *Bhāgavata*

**Vasu IV** – King of the country of Kāṣmīra (*original Sanskrit name for Kashmir*). Once upon a time, he handed his kingdom over to

his son and was performing Tapas* and reciting the praises of Lord Vishṇu (*as Puṇḍarīkāksha, or the lotus-eyed God*) in the forest. All of a sudden, an ugly man emerged from his body and asked to be put to work. Shocked and surprised, Vasu asked "Who are you? Why have you come here?" The man replied "I am the embodiment of Brahma Hatya. (*the murder of a Brahmin. There was a hierarchy of sins and crimes – the absolute worst was killing a Brahmin*). In your previous life, you were a king in the dynasty of Paunḍra. Your capital was the city of Jananasthāna. Once, while hunting, you hit a Muni, thinking you were aiming at a deer. You performed many Pūjas and Vratas* but all you got as a result was cancer of the stomach. On your deathbed, you thought of your wife, whose name was Nārāyaṇi. Because your lips formed the name of Lord Vishṇu (*Nārāyaṇa is one of the many names of Vishṇu*), the emissaries of Lord Vishnu arrived to take your soul to Swarga (*heaven*). I tried to block them. They beat me up. Then I hid in the pores of your skin. I remained there all the time you were in Swarga as well as after Brahma sent you back to earth as the king of Kāṣmīra. Now, when you recited the praises of 'Puṇḍarīkāksha', I was expelled from your body." Saying "I have been able to learn about my previous life from you. You shall be named Dharmavyādha and live in the forest.", Vasu returned to Swarga. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Vasuda** – Daughter of a Gandharva* woman named Narmada. She and her husband Māli had four sons. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Vasudēva I** – Son of Ṣūrasēna. He ruled the kingdoms of Māthura and Ṣūrasēna. His capital was Mathura. *Bhāgavata*

When Vasudēva was born, the loud sound of Dundubhi (*drums*)

was heard from the sky. Because of this, one of his names was Ānakadundubhi. He had nine brothers, including Dēvabhāga, Sṛnjaya and Ānaka. He also had five sisters including Pṛtha, Ṣrutadēva, and Rājādhidēvi. Vasudēva married seven daughters of Dēvaka including Dēvaki, Ṣānti, Dēva and Dhṛtadēva. He also had other wives among whom were Rōhiṇi, Kausalya and Pauravi. He and Rōhiṇi had sons including Balarāma, Gada, and Sāraṇa; Subhadra and others by Pauravi; Nanda, Upananda etc., by Madira; Gada and others by Dēvarakshita; Kīrtimanta, Sushēṇa, Bhadrasēna, Ṛju, Samadana, Bhadra, and Samkarshaṇa by Dēvaki, with her eighth pregnancy resulting in the birth of Lord Kṛshṇa.

When Vasudēva was taking Dēvaki home in his chariot after their marriage, Ākāṣavāṇi* was heard announcing that Dēvaki's eighth child will kill Kamsa. Kamsa, hearing this, set forth to kill Dēvaki. Vasudēva begged him to let her live, assuring Kamsa that he could kill her sons instead. Satisfied that his purpose of self-preservation will be served as well by killing each of Dēvaki's sons as they were born, Kamsa relented and let her live.

True to his word, Vasudēva took his first-born son Kīrtimanta to Kamsa to be killed. Pleased that Vasudēva kept his word, Kamsa let the child live. After the birth of several more sons, Sage Nārada gave Kamsa the disturbing information that Vasudēva and his family were Dēvas and that he, Kamsa, was an Asura*. Nārada also revealed that Lord Vishṇu Himself will be born to Dēvaki and kill Kamsa. Kamsa immediately killed all the sons of Vasudēva born until then, and put Vasudēva and Dēvaki in prison. Kṛshṇa was born to Dēvaki while she and her husband were in prison. Recognizing that Kṛshṇa was born with aspects of Lord Vishṇu,

Vasudēva and Dēvaki praised Him and prayed to Him. The prison doors magically opened and the prison guards all fell into a deep sleep, enabling Vasudēva to take the baby Kṛshṇa out of the prison. He took Kṛshṇa to a distant village where cowherds lived and placed Him in the bed of Nanda's wife Yaṣōda. He took a baby girl just born to Yaṣōda and put her in the bed with Dēvaki. Yaṣōda was totally unaware of the switch. Even the Yamuna river, on Vasudēva's way, cooperated by parting to let him go across. Kṛshṇa grew up in Yaṣōda's house, under her loving care.

Vasudēva was a Prajāpati* in a previous life. He and his wife performed Tapas* for a long time to propitiate Lord Vishṇu. When Vishṇu appeared to them and asked them to choose a boon, they wished for Vishṇu Himself to be born as their son. Vishṇu was born to them as Kṛshṇa to fulfill that boon.

In another previous life, Vasudēva was Kaṣyapa (*the progenitor of both the Dēvas and Asuras*). Once, one of his wives, Aditi (*mother of the Dēvas*) approached him romantically. At the time, he was making love to another wife of his, Kadruva. Angry and disappointed, Aditi gave her husband and Kadruva a Ṣāpa that they would be born as mortal humans. Kaṣyapa was born as Vasudēva due to that Ṣāpa. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

Once upon a time, Kaṣyapa borrowed sacred cows from Samudra (*the Ocean God*). Samudra requested the return of his cows. Two of Kaṣyapa's wives, Surabhi and Aditi, did not wish to return the cows and Kaṣyapa refused to comply with Samudra's request. Samudra gave Kaṣyapa a Ṣāpa that he would be born as a human and tend cows to atone for his crime of stealing cows. Kaṣyapa was born as Vasudēva and tended Kamsa's cows as a

result of that Ṣāpa. *Hari Vamṣa*

**Vasudēva II** – Wife of Vikunṭhana and mother of Ajamīḍha. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vasudēva III** – He killed King Dēvabhūti and claimed his kingdom. His son was Bhūmitra. *Bhāgavata*

**Vasuhōma** – King of country of Anga. He explained the nature of governance to Māndhāta. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vāsuki** – Son of Kadruva. A Nāga*. The Dēvas sought his assistance when they prepared to churn the ocean of milk in which he was used as the rope around the Mandara mountain which was the churning rod. They gave him the boon of invulnerability to any danger, in gratitude for his help. He was informed by Ēlāputra (*another son of Kadruva*) that Janamējaya (*Arjuna's great-grandson*) would attempt a serpent-sacrifice Yāga, and that Brahma told the Dēvas that a son of one Jaratkāru will make Janamējaya stop the Yāga. To facilitate the saving of serpents, he gave his sister in marriage to Jaratkāru. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vasumana I** – Son born to King Ikshvāku and Mādhavi (see **Gālava**). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vasumana II** – A king. A Muni named Vāmadēva instructed him in Dharma (*rigteousness*). The essence of what he was taught was that Dharma is superior to acquisition of wealth. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vasumitra** – Son of King Sujyēshṭa. His son was Bhadraka. *Bhāgavata*

**Vasupada** – Son born to a river named Ṣuktimati (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*) by a mountain named

Kōlāhala (*in the Purāṇas, mountains are anthropomorphed into men*). Ṣuktimati gave him to Uparicharavasu. He became the commander of Uparicharavasu's forces. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vasurāta** – Cousin of Bhananda. He was ruling the entire country. When Bhananda asked him for his father's share of the kingdom, he refused. Bhananda attacked and killed him. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Vasus** – Once, the eight Vasus, Āpu, Dhruva, Sōma, Dhara, Anila, Anala, Pratyūsha, and Prabhāsa, accompanied by their wives went to the Āṣram of Sage Vasishṭha. There they saw Vasishṭha's sacred cow Nandini and were astounded by her power. The wife of the youngest Vasu, Prabhāsa, wished to take the cow and present her to her companion Jitavati. Prabhāsa, with the aid of his brothers, stole the cow. Vasishṭha, after searching the whole forest for his cow and not finding her, used his special spiritual power of Yoga Dṛshṭi* and realized that the Vasus had stolen her. He gave them a Ṣāpa* that they will be born as mortal humans on earth. Learning of the Ṣāpa, the Vasus pleaded with Vasishṭha that they cannot endure long life on earth. Vasishṭha relented and amended the Ṣāpa, limiting a long life as a childless man to the youngest Vasu, Prabhāsa but allowed the other seven to return to Swarga after a short time on earth.

The eight Vasus, on their way to earth to suffer their Ṣāpa, encountered Ganga (*who was also just then subject to a Ṣāpa by Brahma to live as a human on earth*). She asked them where they were going. They related their sad story and told her they would like to be born to her and King Ṣantanu and requested her to throw them in the river while they were new-born infants. When she

wished to have at least one son live long, the eighth Vasu volunteered to be that son. He was born as Bhīshma. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vasusēna** – Another name for Karṇa. He was given that name because he had a golden glow at birth. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vātāpi** – An Asura*. Son of Simhika and Viprachitti. His brother was Ilvala. His city was Maṇimati Pura. Ilvala had once asked a Brahmin to teach him a Mantra that would give him anything he wished for. The Brahmin rebuffed him. Since then, the brothers hated Brahmins. They embarked on a campaign of killing Brahmins. They would invite some Brahmin to dinner. Using Vātāpi's shape-shifting ability, Ilvala would turn him into a lamb, cook him and serve him as the Brahmin's dinner. Once a Brahmin guest ate Vātāpi, Ilvala would say "Come, Vātāpi" and Vātāpi would tear the Brahmin's stomach, thereby killing the Brahmin, and come out. According to his practice, he fed Vātāpi as dinner for Agastya. Realizing that Ilvala and his brother were killing Brahmins in this manner, Agastya rubbed his stomach and said, "Be digested, Vātāpi". Vātāpi was digested inside Agastya's stomach and finally died for good. *Vishṇu Purāṇa; Mahā Bhārata*

**Vātaṣikha** – Son of Kadruva. A Nāga*. *Bhāgavata*

**Vatsa I** – An Asura*. When Balarāma and Kṛshṇa were tending cattle and feeding the calves, he disguised himself as a calf and was killing the calves by licking them. Lord Kṛshṇa recognised him as an Asura and killed him. *Bhāgavata*

**Vatsa II** – Son of Pratardhana, the king of Kāṣi*. He hid in the forest for fear of Paraṣurāma (*the sixth incarnation of Lord*

*Vishṇu, the second fully human one*), and tended and protected calves (*one of the meanings of Vatsa in Sanskrit is 'calf'*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vatsandhra** – Son of Vananda. An Asura* named Kujambha had abducted the two sons and daughter Mudāvati of King Vidūratha and kept them captive in Pātāḷa (*a netherworld*). Vidūratha issued a proclamation that he will give his daughter in marriage to whoever kills the Asura and rescues his sons and daughter. Vatsandhra rescued them and married Mudāvati. They had sons named Prāmṣa, Pravīra, Ṣūra, Suchakra, Vikrama, Krama, Bali, Balāka, Chanḍa and Prachanḍa. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Vatsaprīti** – Son of Halandhana. His son was Prāmṣu. *Bhāgavata*

**Vatsara** – Son of Dhruva and his wife Bhrami. He succeeded to the kingdom after Dhruva. His and his wife Sarvarthi had sons named Pushpārṇa, Chandrakētu, Ūrṇu, Vasu and Jaya. *Bhāgavata*

**Vatsarāja** – A king. He lost his kingdom and sought refuge in the Āṣram of Sage Vasishṭha, who advised him to perform Nārasimha Vrata* (*worship of Lord Narasimha, the fourth incarnation of Lord Vishṇu, as a hybrid of man and lion*). He performed the Vrata and regained his kingdom. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Vātya** – Disciple of Ṣākalya. He taught the version of the Ṛg Vēda he had learnt to Jātukarṇi. *Bhāgavata*

**Vāyu** – One of the Dikpālakas*. In a previous life, he was a Brahmin named Pūtātma, and a cousin of Kaṣyapa. Pūtātma performed Tapas* for many years in the city of Kāṣi* directed towards Lord Ṣiva. Ṣiva, pleased with his Tapas, gave him boons

including the position of Dikpālaka, the embodiment of the five winds of the body, and the ability to be omnipresent. (*Kāṣi Khanḍa is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Kāṣi Khanḍa*

Once upon a time, a great war was fought between the Dēvas and Asuras*. The Dēvas won and were rejoicing, assuming the victory was entirely their own achievement. The Supreme Being (*Para Brahma* in Sanskrit, to differentiate from Brahma, one of the Trinity*) appeared in their midst but was not recognised as the Supreme Being by any of them. Agni approached Him to find out who He was but did not know. Vāyu then attempted to learn the nature and identity of the visitor. Para Brahma asked Vāyu who he was. Vāyu replied that his name was Vāyu and he can move any object. Parabrahma gave him a blade of grass and asked him to carry it away. Vāyu, even exerting himself to the maximum, was unable to move one blade of grass even an inch. Even then he did not recognise the entity as the Supreme Being. But because he stood in the proximity of Para Brahma, Vāyu attained a status as one of the premium Gods. *Kenōpanishad*

Once, Vāyu and Ṣēshu (*the ten-hooded serpent on which Lord Vishṇu reclines*) were involved in a dispute as to which of them was the more powerful. Ṣēshu wound himself around Mēru (*the tallest and biggest mountain, at the northern tip of the known universe at the time of the Purāṇas*) mountain. Vāyu blew as a violent wind. Some of the peaks of Mēru broke off from the mountain and fell into the ocean and became islands. *Vichitra Rāmāyaṇa*

Vāyu and a female Vānara* named Anjana had a son (*Ānjanēya, another name for Hanumān, the great devotee of Lord Rāma*).

Indra* once hit the boy with his Vajrāyudha (*thunderbolt, Indra's signature weapon; diamond weapon*). Ānjanēya fainted. Vāyu, angry with Indra, stopped functioning as the God of Wind. The world became devoid of air. Brahma and the Devas revived Hanumān and gave him many boons and pleaded with Vāyu to resume his function. Thus pacified, Vāyu spread all over again.

Vāyu once asked the daughters of a king named Kuṣanābha (*grandfather of Sage Viṣvāmitra*) to marry him. They refused and laughed at him. An angry Vāyu turned them into ugly hunchbacks. *Rāmāyaṇa*

Vāyu was the father of Bhīma (*second oldest of the Pānḍavas*), Kunti's Kshētraja* son. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vēdadarṣa** – He learnt Atharva Vēda from a disciple of Sumanta and taught it to Ṣaulkāyani, Brahmabali, Nirdōsha, and Pippalāyana. *Bhāgavata*

**Vēdarāṣi** – A Brahmin. Husband of Chandrakānta. When his wife associated with bad people and became a prostitute, he expelled her from his house. (*Tula Kāvēri Māhātmyam is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Tula Kāvēri Māhātmyam*

**Vēdaṣira I** – Son of Mārkanḍēya and husband of Pīvari. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa; Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Vēdaṣira II** – A Brahmin. Once, while he was performing Tapas*, he saw an Apsara* named Ṣuchi flying by. He had a spontaneous ejaculation on seeing her. He put the semen in the palm of the Apsara and asked her to swallow it. She did so and became pregnant. A daughter, Dhūtapāpa was born to her and became a river (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*).

(*Kāṣi Khanḍa is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Kāṣi Khanḍa*

**Vēdavanta** – Son of Bandhumanta and father of Bandhu. *Bhāgavata*

**Vēdavati** – Daughter of Kuṣadhwaja and his wife Mālāvati. She was born while Kuṣadhwaja was chanting Vēdic Hymns. The sound of Vēdas was heard from the delivery room when she was born. She was named Vēdavati because of this. Kuṣadhwaja often said that he will give her in marriage only to Lord Vishṇu. An Asura* desired her hand. Kuṣadhwaja spurned the Asura's request. The Asura, furious at the rejection, killed Kuṣadhwaja. Unable to bear the grief of losing her husband, Mālāvati died as well. Thus orphaned, Vēdavati started performing Tapas*. Once, Rāvaṇa saw Vēdavati in meditation and dazzled by her beauty, asked her to marry him. She told him that she will not marry anyone but Vishṇu. Driven by his lust, Rāvaṇa grabbed her and tried to kiss her. Vēdavati, saying "It was my mistake engaging in conversation with you, knowing you are evil. I cannot live in this body made impure by your touch", created a fire with her Yōgic power. Then, saying "If my heart is truly dedicated to Vishṇu, I will take birth as an Ayōnija (*born without passing through a birth canal*), marry Vishṇu and destroy your lineage", she immolated herself in the fire. Some time later, she was born in Lanka* (*Rāvaṇa's Kingdom*) inside a lotus flower. At first, she was visible only to Rāvaṇa. When Rāvaṇa's court astrologers predicted that her birth portends future disasters, she was put in a box and released into the sea. The baby was carried to Mithila (*capital city of King Janaka*). She was Sīta. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Vēda Vyāsa** – The Sage who codified and divided the Vēdas into its constituents, namely Ṛg, Yajur, Atharva, and Sāma. Originally, the Vēdas were all together, uncollated. Actually, Vyāsa is not anyone's name. A Muni who preserves and propagates the Vēdas is known as Vēda Vyāsa. A different Muni propagates the ancient knowledge of the Vēdas in each Dwāpara Yuga (*the third of four recurring epochs, Kṛta, Trēta, Dwāpara, and Kali. We are presently in a Kali Yuga*). Swayambhu was Vyāsa in the first Dwāpara. Prajāpati became Vyāsa in the second Dwāpara. Ṣukra was the Vyāsa in the third Dwāpara. Later Vyāsas included Bṛhaspati, Vasishṭha, Trivarsha, and Sanadwāja.

When the Vēdas emerged from the faces of Brahma, born in a lotus growing out of Lord Vishṇu's navel, Vishṇu created a mind-born son, Apāntaratama. Vishnu summoned His mind-born son and directed him to listen to the Vēdas with undivided attention and compile them. Apāntaratama accordingly codified, divided into four and compiled the Vēdas. Brahma said to him "Vēda Vyāsa! You have pleased me immensely by your work on the Vēdas. You should perform this task in every future epoch. In future, a grandson of Sage Vasishṭha will be born, named Parāṣara. Be born as his son. Kings of the Kuru dynasty, born due to you, will engage in internecine wars and destroy the dynasty. You should protect the Vēdas even through that. You will have a son who will be immune from the passions. Go and act according to your free will."

Vyāsa appeared and helped Satyavati (*his mother*) and her descendants whenever they needed something and 'thought of'* him. Satyavati's sons (*by King Ṣantanu*), Chitrāngada and

Vichitravīrya, both died without having children. Bhīshma (*King Ṣantanu's son by Ganga*) refused to get married (*due to his vow to Satyavati's parents to get them to agree to give their daughter in marriage to Ṣantanu*). Responding to his mother's request, Vyāsa sired Dhṛtarāshṭra (*by Ambika*), Pānḍu (*by Ambālika*) and Vidura (*by Ambika's maidservant*).

After the Pānḍavas escaped from Duryōdhana's attempt to kill them in the wax house, Vyāsa appeared to them, and after advising them to live righteous lives, he informed them that King Drupada was planning to hold a Swayamvara* for his daughter and suggested that they should attend. Later, when King Drupada hesitated to give his daughter in marriage to all five Pānḍavas, it was again Vyāsa who appeared and relieved Drupada's concern by showing him the previous life of the Pānḍavas using his Divya Dṛshṭi* (*which Vyāsa, being a great Sage, obtained by his spiritual power*). He did not come to the aid of the Pānḍavas after they went to Indraprastha or when they lost everything in the rigged games of chance or when Duryōdhana and Duṣṣāsana humiliated Draupadi. But when Duryōdhana was laying plans to kill the Pānḍavas during their exile in the forest, Vyāsa learnt of them by his Divya Dṛshṭi, and went to Dhṛtarāshṭra and advised him to restrain his son. He then went to see the Pānḍavas in the forest and bolstered their courage as they seemed to be despirited, taught Dharmarāja a particular kind of magic known as Pratismṛti (*Sanskrit for 'recollection'*) and advised Arjuna to perform Tapas* in order to obtain powerful weapons.

Duryōdhana, of course, did not heed his father's advice about reconciling with the Pānḍavas. Dhṛtarāshṭra then 'thought of'

Vyāsa and asked whether the Pāṇḍavas or his sons were more powerful. Vyāsa told him that the Pāṇḍavas were more powerful because Kṛshṇa was on their side, and advised him that his sons should seek peace. War could not be avoided. Dhṛtarāshṭra was saddened. Vyāsa then appeared and saying that the time has come when the warring kings would perish, offered Dhṛtarāshṭra the ability to watch the events unfold, with Divya Dṛshṭi. Saying he could not abide watching the destruction, Dhṛtarāshṭra wanted only to hear the news. Vyāsa then gave Sanjaya (*constant companion of Dhṛtarāshṭra*) the power to observe all the events on the battlefield without being visible or exposed to danger.

As the war progressed, Vyāsa appeared every once in a while. When Dharmarāja was mourning the death of Abhimanyu, Vyāsa came and consoled him. He revealed the greatness of Kṛshṇa to Aṣvatthāma (*son of Drōṇa, who was virulently anti-Pāṇḍava towards the end of the war*). He gave Divya Dṛshṭi to Dhṛtarāshṭra, Gāndhāri and Kunti so that they could see their loved ones who had died in the war, and be consoled. He advised Dhṛtarāshṭra to go to Tapōvana*.

Among Vyāsa's disciples were Pyla and Vaiṣampāyana. He composed the Mahā Bhārata and sent Nārada to narrate it in Dēva Lōka; Dēvala to narrate it to Pitṛ Lōka (*the abode of the spirits of dead par*ents); Ṣuka to the Garuḍa, Gandharva, Yaksha and Rākshasa Lōkas; and Vaiṣampāyana to earth to narrate it to Janamējaya (*great-grandson of Arjuna*).

Once, observing two parrots living family life bring food for their chicks, Vyāsa felt the urge to start a family of his own and told Nārada about his wish. Acting on Nārada's advice, he went to

the Himālaya mountain to perform Tapas to Ṣakti (*Sanskrit for 'energy', Ṣakti is the Supreme Being who is formless, without beginning or end, and takes female form when wishing to take physical form*). His Tapas generated so much heat that Indra* and the Dēvas were concerned enough to go to Lord Ṣiva. Realizing that the extreme heat was being caused by Vyāsa's Tapas, Ṣiva went to Vyāsa. Vyāsa requested Ṣiva to give him a son who embodies the attributes of the five elements. Ṣiva assured him that such a son will be born to him, and left.

As he was starting the sacred fire with two sticks of kindling, he saw the Apsara* Ghṛtāchi. Realizing that he was overcome by sexual desire at her sight, she played a trick on him by taking the form of a parrot and strolling in front of him. He went on rubbing the kindling together while watching her. In his state of sexual excitement, his semen fell into the sacred fire. A son, Ṣuka was born from the semen. Vyāsa imparted the knowledge of the Vēdas to his son. When the son asked to be taught the path to Mukti*, Vyāsa advised him to learn it from King Janaka.

One day, while Vyāsa and Ṣuka were studying the Vēdas, the wind started blowing fast. Considering that the time was not suitable for study due to the heavy wind, Vyāsa went to the river to bathe. While he was away, Sage Nārada arrived and saying "I am here to help you", taught philosophy to Ṣuka. With his desire for seeking Mukti rekindled by Nārada's discourse, Ṣuka, planning to go to Kailāsa (*Lord Ṣiva's abode*), rose into the sky. Vyāsa, returning from the river and not finding Ṣuka at home, was calling out his name loudly. It seemed to him like all of nature was responding "Yes" to his calls. Puzzled, he walked towards the place

from which he thought the sound was coming. Some young women who were bathing naked in a pond, embarrassed at being seen by him, scampered to the shore and hurriedly put their clothes on. Vyāsa asked them "You did not make a move when Ṣuka, a handsome man much younger than me, went this way. Why did you rush to put on clothes on my account?" They told him that they were not embarrassed when Ṣuka saw them naked because he was free of the passions of the flesh and had renounced worldly pursuits. Ṣiva then appeared to him and said "You wanted a son with the attributes of nature and I gave you what you wanted. He has achieved a status that even the Dēvas cannot aspire to. Do not feel bad."

Even though he had expounded the principles of Dharma, composed the Mahā Bhārata, and divided and codified the Vēdas, Vyāsa still felt something was missing and sat in his Āṣram, dissatisfied with his achievements. Sage Nārada then came to visit him and revealed that his sense of unease was due to the fact that he had not narrated the stories of Lord Vishṇu. Vyāsa then composed the Bhāgavata.

In the future epoch in which Sūryasāvarṇi will be Manu*, Vyāsa will be one of Saptarshis*. *Bhāgavata*

Vyāsa was living in the city of Kāṣi*. One day, nobody would give him Bhiksha*. Suffering severe hunger pains, Vyāsa was about to give the people of the city a Ṣāpa*. Goddess Pārvati then gave him Bhiksha and said to him "Since you were about to give the people in this city a Ṣāpa, you should not live here. Leave this place." Vyāsa regretted his intemperate thought and went to the other bank of the Ganga river after taking Her permission to visit

Lord Ṣiva (*worshipped to this day under the title of Viṣvēṣwara, Sanskrit for 'Lord of the Universe'*) on Ashṭami and Chaturdaṣi (*the eighth and fourteenth day of each lunar cycle respectively*). The village where he settled is named Vyāsa Kāṣi. *Mahā Bhārata; Bhāgavata; Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa; Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Vēgavanta** – A platoon leader in the army of Sālva. He was defeated by Sāmbu (*son of Kṛshṇa*) in the Mahā Bhārata war. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vēna** – Son of King Anga and his wife Sunīdha. Vēna was a fierce-looking man and was not righteous. His father had him coronated as his successor and went to the Tapōvana*. As soon as he ascended the throne, Vēna summoned the people and proclaimed that the only Dharma (*righteous path*) was what he said it was, and that no other authority exists. He also declared laws that forbade Yāgas and made the worship of Brahmins a crime. A group of Munis, led by Marīchi, approached him and said "O! King! We are planning to perform a Yāga for a hundred years without interruption. Is it proper for you to make laws against long-running traditions and Dharma? Please rescind these laws." Vēna became angry with them and saying "Is there another Dharma other than the commands of the ruler of the land? Who do you worship in your Yāga? Who is more worthy of worship than me?", he rejected the request of the Munis. He was harassing anyone performing a Yāga. Even though Brahmins were peaceful by nature, they decided his behaviour was unbearable. They captured him and churned his left hand. A short, black, deformed man emerged from the hand. They named him Nishāda from whom other Nishādas were born. They then churned Vēna's right

hand, hoping for cleansing. A man with the brilliance of the Sun was born from that hand. He was named Pṛthu. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*

**Vēnkaṭāchala** – (*A mountain*) Son of Mēru mountain (*in the Purāṇas, mountains are anthropomorphed into men*). Once, Ṣēshu (*multi-hooded, articulate serpent on which Lord Vishṇu rests*) and Vāyu (*the God of Wind*) made a wager to determine who is more powerful. Ṣēshu wound himself around the mountain in a tight grip. Vāyu blew the mountain away. Lord Vishṇu lived on this mountain. Vishṇu thereby acquired the name Vēnkaṭēṣwara. In the Trēta Yuga (*the second of the four epochs, the current one being Kali, the fourth*), Vēnkaṭāchala was known as Vṛshabhādri (*Vēnkaṭa is Sanskrit for 'removes sin'; Achala, literally 'immovable' and Adri, mean 'mountain'; Vṛshabha means 'bull'*). Another name for Vēnkaṭāchala is Anjanādri. (*Vēnkaṭāchala Māhātmyam* is a 'Sthala Purana'*.) *Vēnkaṭāchala Māhātmyam*

**Vēnkaṭēṣwara** – Once, Lord Vishṇu's Consort Lakshmi abandoned Him and went to a place on earth named Kollāpura, angry with Vishṇu because He did not retaliate against Sage Bhṛgu for insulting Him (*actually, the story goes that Bhṛgu insulted Lakshmi more than Vishṇu by kicking Him on His chest, which is considered Lakshmi's residence*). After She left, Vishṇu went to Ṣēshādri (*one of the seven hills called Saptagiri, near the town of Tirupati in present-day Andhra Pradesh state*) and was inside a snakes' nest (*a mud hill with vertical tunnels*). Realizing where Vishṇu was hiding, Lakshmi came there to help Him. As part of the support system for Vishṇu or Vēnkaṭēṣwara, Brahma took the

form of a cow, Ṣiva that of a calf and came there. Lakshmi, in human form, sold the cow and calf to the king of Chōḷa. Each day, the cow would drop all her milk into a hole in the mud hill. The king, upset that his cow was not producing any milk, blamed the cowherd. The cowherd followed the cow one day, and seeing her give all her milk to the mud hill, swung an axe at the cow in anger. Vēnkaṭēṣwara, seeing this, shielded the cow's head with His own. Vēnkaṭēṣwara was injured and bled. The cow went to the king's Sabha (*court*), with bloodstains on her body. The king then followed the cow as she led him to where Vēnkaṭēṣwara was. Vēnkaṭēṣwara told the king of the cowherd's attack on Him and gave the cowherd a Ṣāpa* that he would become a Piṣācha (*fiend*). The cowherd begged His forgiveness.

Vishṇu then invoked Bṛhaspati (*Guru and physician to the Dēvas*). Bṛhaspati came and prescribed an herbal medicine. A woman named Vakuḷamālika was taking care of Vēnkaṭēṣwara. Noticing that Vēnkaṭēṣwara always looked sad, Vakuḷamālika gently inquired the reason for His depression. Vēnkaṭēṣwara told her that He had seen and fallen in love with Padmāvati, daughter of Ākāṣarāja and that when He showered her with flowers, she threw stones at Him. He expressed His desire to marry her somehow. Vakuḷamālika went and visited Padmāvati and reported to Vēnkaṭēṣwara that the girl was suffering from a high fever. Vishṇu disguised Himself as a female fortune-teller (*Indian Gypsy*), went to Padmāvati's mother and told her that her daughter had seen Vēnkaṭēṣwara in the mud hill and fell in love with Him and that her fever was caused by her unrequited love. After He returned home, Vakuḷamālika also went and persuaded the mother

to give her daughter in marriage to Vēnkaṭēṣwara. Finally, Ākāṣarāja consented to the alliance. Vēnkaṭēṣwara borrowed money from Kubera (*the God of Wealth; legend has it that all the offerings to Lord Vēnkaṭēṣwara at the Tirupati temple go towards payment of interest on this ancient loan*) to meet the expenses of the wedding (*He was marrying a princess and had to match the grandeur of the arrangements by the bride's family*). Vēnkaṭēṣwara was concerned of Lakshmi's reaction to His new marriage. Sūrya (*the Sun God*) went to Lakshmi and brought Her over. Lakshmi consented to Vēnkaṭēṣwara's marriage with Padmāvati. After their wedding, Lakshmi returned to Kollāpura. Ākāṣarāja built a Temple for Vēnkaṭēṣwara. (*Vēnkaṭāchala Māhātmyam* is a 'Sthala *Purāṇa*'*). *Vēnkaṭāchala Māhātmyam*

**Vibhāṇḍaka** – Son of Kaṣyapa. He remained celibate and was performing Tapas*. One day, while he was bathing in a river, he happened to see Ūrvaṣi. He ejaculated spontaneously at the sight of the beautiful woman. His semen fell into the river. A doe, drinking water from the river, ingested his semen mixed with water. The doe became pregnant. Ṛṣyaṣṛnga was the son born to the doe.

Ṛṣyaṣṛnga knew no one other than Vibhāṇḍaka and had never been anywhere except the Āṣram. He constantly performed Tapas*. One day, Vibhāṇḍaka went out to gather fruit in the forest after directing Ṛṣyaṣṛnga to start the holy fire. Ṛṣyaṣṛnga, who was visited by a beautiful courtesan during his father's absence (*due to total isolation, he was blissfully unaware that his visitor was female. He assumed it was the son of some other Muni who happened to be extremely good-looking*), was distracted by thoughts of his visitor and delayed the chore assigned to him.

When Vibhāṇḍaka returned and asked why the fire had not been started, he described his visitor and showed him the wonderful fruits he was given. Vibhāṇḍaka told him "Asuras* use all sorts of tricks to distract us from our Tapas. We should reject anything given by them." He then went out again, leaving Ṛṣyaṣṛnga alone in the Āṣram. Ṛṣyaṣṛnga travelled to Anga Dēṣa and got married. Vibhāṇḍaka found him after a long search and brought his son and daughter-in-law back to his Āṣram. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vibhāvasu** – A Brahmin. When his younger brother Supratīka asked for his share of inheritance from their father, he got angry. He not only rejected his brother's claim, but also gave Supratīka a Ṣāpa* that he shall become an elephant. Supratīka countered with his own Ṣāpa that Vibhāvasu shall become a turtle. They kept quarreling even after each became what the other's Ṣāpa dictated. Garutmanta*, on his way to obtain Amṛtam*, saw them, grabbed both in his claws and flew to an uninhabited forest and ate them both. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vibhīshaṇa** – Son of Viṣravasu and a woman named Mālini. Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa were his half-brothers, being sons of Viṣravasu and his wife Kaikasi, also known as Pushpōtkaṭa. *Mahā Bhārata*

Third son of Viṣravasu by his wife Kaikasi. When Kaikasi was lamenting the possibility that all her sons might be evil, Viṣravasu assured her that her third son will be a moral and righteous man. Vibhīshaṇa spurned the Asura* ways enthusiastically embraced by his older brothers. He also did not perform Tapas* directed towards Lord Brahma (*which many Asuras did with the ulterior motive of eliminating threats to their life or power*). He married

Sarama, the daughter of a Gandharva* named Ṣailūsha.

Vibhīshaṇa not only avoided taking part in the cruel activities of older brother Rāvaṇa but he constantly harangued him about them. Whenever Rāvaṇa abducted another woman and kept her prisoner, he would criticize him but Rāvaṇa paid him no heed. On receiving news that Rāma was preparing to attack, Rāvaṇa assembled his council of ministers. Vibhīshaṇa alone advised that he should promptly return Sīta because they would be unable to defeat Rāma in war. Rāvaṇa, furious at his brother's insolence, was about to strike at him. Vibhīshaṇa then left Lanka*, crossed the ocean and joined Rāma as an ally.

When Rāma was wondering how He and His army could cross the ocean, it was Vibhīshaṇa who suggested that He pray to Samudra (*the Ocean God*). He also revealed many strategic facts and secrets about the defences of Lanka. Realizing that Rāvaṇa would attempt to perform a Yāga named Pātāḷa Hōma*, and that if he manages to complete the Yāga, Rāvaṇa would become invincible, Vibhīshaṇa informed Rāma of this secret. He suggested that Rāma should do whatever was necessary to disrupt the Yāga. At one point during the war, Rāma began to feel that he could not defeat Rāvaṇa. When one of Rāvaṇa's heads was severed, another immediately grew in its place. When an arm was cut off, another replaced it. Then, Vibhīshaṇa revealed a secret to Rāma. He advised Rāma to hit Rāvaṇa's navel because a small pot of Amṛtam* was located there. Rāma did as suggested. Rāvaṇa immediately died and slumped to the ground like a tree cut off at its roots. Defeating Rāvaṇa would have been impossible without Vibhīshaṇa's timely help. After the demise of Rāvaṇa, Vibhīshaṇa

was crowned ruler of Lanka. He ruled Lanka for a long time and remained a devotee of Rāma. *Rāmāyaṇa*

When Dharmarāja was performing the Rājasūya Yāga*, Sahadēva sent an emissary to Vibhīshaṇa. Vibhīshaṇa sent much wealth as tribute. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vibhu I** – During the Manvantara (*epoch, reign as Manu**) of Svārōchisha, Lord Vishṇu was born to Dushita, daughter of a Brahmin named Vēdaṣira and was named Vibhu. He observed celibacy, performing a Vrata* named "Kaumārika Brahmacharya". *Bhāgavata*

**Vibhu II** – Son of a Vasu named Pratyūsha. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Vichintya** – One of the commanders of the army of King Sālva. Chārudhēshṇa (*son of Kṛshṇa and Rukmiṇi*) defeated him in the Mahā Bhārata war. As soon as Vichintya was defeated, all of Sālva's army became dejected and ran away from the battlefield. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vichitravīrya** – Second son of King Ṣantanu and his second wife Satyavati. Chitrāngada was his elder brother. After Chitrāngada was killed in a war, Bhīshma (*Ṣantanu's son by his first wife Ganga*) crowned him king. Bhīshma, forcibly, also brought Ambika and Ambālika, daughters of the king of Kāṣi* and gave them to Vichitravīrya in marriage. Vichitravīrya overindulged, living a life of debauchery, and died young. At the urging of their mother-in-law Satyavati, Ambika and Ambālika had Kshētraja* sons Dhṛtarāshṭra and Pānḍu respectively, by Sage Vyāsa (*Satyavati's son before her marriage to Ṣantanu*). The sons were considered sons of Vichitravīrya by the law and custom of the day.

*Mahā Bhārata*

**Vidama** – An Asura*. Son of Ṣataṣṛnga. He had brothers named Dama and Sadama. They went to war against Ambarīsha's kingdom and were killed by Sudēva. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vidarbha** – Son of Jyāmagha. His father, after defeating several enemy kings, had brought home the daughter of one of the defeated kings, intending to marry her. When his wife Ṣaibya got angry at the sight of another woman, he promised her "She will be your daughter-in-law." When Ṣaibya pointed out that they do not have a son, he assured her that one will be born to them. After Vidarbha was born and reached a marriageable age, Jyāmagha performed the marriage of his son with that girl. Sons named Kaiṣika, Rōmapāda, Kaṣa, and Kratha were born to the.couple. *Matsya Purāṇa, Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Vidēha** – A king. He received instruction in the many aspects of the Supreme Being from the nine sons of Sage Ṛshabha, named Kavi, Hari, Antariksha, Prabuddha, Pippalāyana, Āvirhōtra, Dramīḷa, Chamasa, and Karabhājana. *Bhāgavata*

**Vidhāta** – Son of Sage Bhṛgu and brother of Dhāta. He married Niyati, daughter of Mēru mountain (*in the Purāṇas, mountains are anthropomorphed into men*). They had a son named Mṛkanḍu. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Vidhisāra** – A king. Son of Kshētragjna. He was an Ajātaṣatru (*Sanskrit for 'he whose enemies are not born', meaning every person born who knew him, was his friend. Another to have deserved this title was Dharmarāja, the eldest of the Pānḍavas*). *Bhāgavata*

**Vidhūratha** – Younger brother of Dantavaktra. After watching Lord Kṛshṇa kill Dantavaktra, he also battled Him and was killed. *Bhāgavata*

**Vidruma** – A Brahmin. Father of Ananta. He was born when his father, who was childless for a long time, was an old man. Ananta was born a eunuch. Vidruma prayed to Lord Ṣiva to make his son virile. Lord Ṣiva granted his wish. Once, while Ananta was bathing in the ocean, an alligator dragged him away. *Kalki (Bhavishya) Purāṇa*

**Vidura** – Satyavati (*Bhīshma's step-mother, King Ṣantanu's second wife*) directed her daughter-in-law Ambika to beget another Kshētraja* son by Sage Vyāsa when Dhṛtarāshṭra, Ambika's first-born, turned out to be congenitally blind. Unwilling to sleep with the old Sage she found repugnant (*she closed her eyes while having sex with him the first time, which was why the first-born was blind*), she sent her maidservant in her place. Vidura was the son born to the servant and the Sage.

It was Yama (*the God of Death*) himself who took birth as Vidura as a result of a Ṣāpa* by a Sage named Māṇḍavya. Dhṛtarāshṭra and Pāṇḍu, the other sons born to the widows of Vichitravīrya by Sage Vyāsa, accepted Vidura as their brother. He also treated them as his brothers. Vidura was an intelligent, knowledgable, and a moral person, so much so that Dhṛtarāshṭra used to call on him for help and advice.

Vidura was particularly fond of the five sons of King Pāṇḍu (*the Pāṇḍavas*) because of their good qualities and righteous behaviour. He was aware that Duryōdhana, his brothers and his cohorts hated the Pāṇḍavas and were constantly trying to harm

them. However, he never said a word about this to Duryōdhana. He became aware of Duryōdhana's evil plan to burn the Pāṇḍavas to death in the wax house Duryōdhana had built earlier on the Pāṇḍavas' route to the city of Kāṣi*. To protect the Pāṇḍavas, Vidura sent a miner before the Pāṇḍavas' departure to build an escape tunnel from the wax house. Dhṛtarāshṭra was grieving, believing that the Pāṇḍavas had died in the fire of the wax house. Vidura did not reveal at the time the fact that he helped the Pāṇḍavas escape the fire. He revealed the news of the Pāṇḍavas' safety to Dhṛtarāshṭra only after he learned that the Pāṇḍavas had married Draupadi. Realizing that his sons were becoming afraid of the Pāṇḍavas, Dhṛtarāshṭra asked Vidura for suggestions on how his sons' fear can be relieved. Vidura replied that it was high time to stop cheating the Pāṇḍavas out of their share of the kingdom and release it to them (*it was King Pāṇḍu who won a large portion of the empire through war while his blind half-brother was the titular emperor*). Dhṛtarāshṭra finally agreed with Vidura's proposal and dispatched him to the city of King Drupada to bring the Pāṇḍavas to the capital.

Dhṛtarāshṭra split the empire and gave half of it to the Pāṇḍavas. They built their own capital city (*Indraprastha*) and lived there. Vidura, however, did not join them, but stayed in Hastināpura. He kept himself informed of Pāṇḍavas' well-being and rejoiced at news of their achievements including Dharmarāja's Yāga. Duryōdhana, however, was enduring a slow-burn of jealousy. Duryōdhana hatched a plan (*the idea was his uncle Ṣakuni's*) to arrange a rigged game of chance and cheat the Pāṇḍavas out of their kingdom and asked his father to arrange the game.

Dhṛtarāshṭra, who never (*at least up to that point*) took any important decision without consulting Vidura, mentioned his son's desire for a game of chance with Dharmarāja. As soon as he heard about gambling, Vidura advised Dhṛtarāshṭra that gambling would inevitably lead to conflict between the cousins, and urged him to put a stop to Duryōdhana's plan. Dhṛtarāshṭra, unwilling to deny his son's request, not only overruled Vidura but asked him to go and bring the Pāṇḍavas for the games of chance. Vidura informed Bhīshma of these goings-on, but did go and bring the Pāṇḍavas with him. Ṣakuni was playing on behalf of his nephew with his own magic dice. Even though Vidura was unhappy with the situation, he was ignored by all. Duryōdhana, as if to rub salt in his wound of humiliation, asked Vidura to bring Draupadi to the Court. Vidura refused to comply with the heinous request. When Draupadi asked her question to determine the legality of her loss of freedom (*did my husband lose me after or before he lost himself in a gamble?*), Vidura asserted that it needed to be answered. No one else spoke up (*actually one of the junior Kauravas did but no one paid any attention to him either*). The Pāṇḍavas lost every bet and were forced to go into twelve years of Araṇyavāsa (*exile in the forest*) and a year of Agjnātavāsa (*incognito*).

The Pāṇḍavas left for the forest to serve out their exile. Dhṛtarāshṭra asked Vidura what they were likely to do after the exile. Vidura said "They will wage war and win the empire. You paid no heed to my advice to stop the crooked games of chance. You can resolve the situation even now by rebuking Duryōdhana and returning their kingdom to the Pāṇḍavas." Dhṛtarāshṭra, in a fit of anger, said to Vidura "You always oppose my sons. You do not

deserve to live here. Go away." Vidura took a chariot and went and joined the Pāṇḍavas, who were at the time in the Kāmyaka forest. Soon, Dhṛtarāshṭra missed Vidura's company and sent his other constant companion and helpmate Sanjaya to bring Vidura back. Dharmarāja supported Dhṛtarāshṭra's request for Vidura to return, advising him to take good care of the old, blind emperor. Vidura returned to the capital, Hastināpura. Dhṛtarāshṭra welcomed him with respect and affection and apologised for his harsh words.

Duryōdhana and his cohorts kept trying to provoke the Pāṇḍavas during the exile in the forest and to expose them while they were incognito (*so that the whole cycle of exile and incognito will have to be repeated*). Vidura was kept in the dark about these efforts, with neither Dhṛtarāshṭra nor Duryōdhana revealing any information to him, nor did Vidura bring up the topic to either of them (*though he probably suspected they were trying, even if he did not know*). After the Pāṇḍavas successfully completed the year incognito, Kṛshṇa arrived in Hastināpura as an emissary of the Pāṇḍavas. He made a point of dining in Vidura's residence. Vidura described to Kṛshṇa the attitude of Duryōdhana and company and told Him peace was unattainable. War did break out as he expected. Vidura did not take sides in the war. Unwilling to observe a war he was unable to prevent, Vidura went on a pilgrimage to holy places. He visited many holy places and learnt the nature of the soul from Sage Maitrēya. By the time he returned, the Mahā Bhārata war had ended. The Pāṇḍavas welcomed him with honour and respect. Dhṛtarāshṭra was mourning the death of all his sons. Vidura gently shifted his brother's mind from the past, and encouraged him to renounce worldly ties. He accompanied Dhṛtarāshṭra and the

Kaurava women as they left the city and went to the Tapōvana*. After some time, he left Dhṛtarāshṭra's company, and renouncing food and water, started Tapas*. Once, Dharmarāja, after visiting Dhṛtarāshṭra, sought to visit Vidura and not seeing him around, shouted loudly "Vidura!". Dharmarāja then saw a naked Vidura. The apparition, instead of walking towards the Āṣram, kept walking into the woods. Dharmarāja pursued him and begged him "O, Vidura! I am Dharmarāja. Please look at me." Vidura stopped and glanced at Dharmarāja for a moment. Then, using his power of Yoga, he left his body and entered Dharmarāja's. When Dharmarāja prepared to perform funeral rites for Vidura's body, he heard Ākāṣavāṇi* say it is not necessary to perform funeral rites to the body of one whose soul has attained Mukti*. Dharmarāja stopped his preparations, went home and informed everyone of the happenings. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vidūratha I** – A king. He had sons named Sumati and Sunīti and a daughter named Mudāvati. Once, while the whole family was strolling in a forest, they noticed the entrance to a tunnel. Some Munis around informed them that it was built by an Asura* named Kujambha as a route for him to go to the netherworld (*Pātāḷa*) and requested the king to kill him.

Once, Mudāvati, while strolling in a garden, was abducted by Kujambha and held in Pātāḷa. Vidūratha sent his sons to rescue her. They were also captured and held by the Asura. Vidūratha then announced that he would give his daughter in marriage to the man who rescues his daughter and sons. A prince named Vatsandhra went to Pātāḷa, killed the Asura and rescued Vidūratha's sons and daughter. Vidūratha performed his daughter's marriage to

Vatsandhra as promised. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Vidūratha II** – Son of Kuru, husband of Sampriya and father of Anaṣva. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vidyāvati** – Daughter of a Gandharva* named Viṣvāvasu. She once asked her father "Who is the best among the Dēva women?" Her father replied that that would be Mīnākshi who is in Madhura (*city in south India, different from Mathura in north India, where Lord Kṛshṇa lived for many years after killng His evil uncle Kamsa*). Vidyāvati prayed to Mīnākshi. Mīnākshi appeared to her as a three year old infant. When Mīnākshi asked her to choose a boon, Vidyāvati said she wanted Mīnākshi to be born as her daughter. Mīnākshi said "It will not happen in your present life. In a future life, when you are the wife of Malayadhwaja, I will be born as your daughter." Vidyāvati was born as Kānchanamāla and became Malayadhwaja's wife. *Skānda Purāṇa*

**Vidyudrūpa** – An Asura*. Once, while he was taking a leisurely stroll with his wife, a (*articulate*) bird named Kanku landed near them. Vidyudrūpa grabbed and killed the bird. Kanku's brother, Kandara, learning of this, searched for Vidyudrūpa and killed him. Vidyudrūpa's widow, Madaniki, took the form of a bird and became Kandara's wife. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Vidyujjihva I** – An Asura*. He was the husband of Ṣūrpaṇakha (*sister of Rāvaṇa*). He accompanied Rāvaṇa in his war with the Kālakēyas (*Asuras, sons of Marīchi and his wife Kālaka*). Rāvaṇa later accidentally hit and killed Vidyujjihva. Vidyujjihva had a son named Jambukumāra. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Vidyujjihva II –** An Asura*, soldier in Rāvaṇa's army. On

Rāvaṇa's orders, he made replicas of Rāma's head and His bow. Rāvaṇa showed these to Sīta and tried to convince Her that Rāma was killed in battle.

*Rāmāyaṇa*

**Vidyunmati** – A woman. Once a king named Sindhudwīpa saw her naked, bathing in a lake. He spontaneously ejaculated at her sight. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Vidyutprabha** – Wife of King Supratīka and mother of Durjaya. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Vighnēṣvara** – Son of Lord Ṣiva. Once, while Ṣiva and Pārvati were engaged in love-making, some Dēvas came to visit. When the love play was interrupted, Ṣiva's semen fell to the ground. A son was born from it. Pārvati raised him. One day, with the boy in Her arms, She called out to Ṣiva "Come look at my son." As soon as Ṣiva looked at him, the boy's head exploded. Pārvati cried bitterly at Her loss. Dēvas scoured the land and brought back the head of an elephant from the shores of the river Pushpabhadra and attached it to the boy's neck. That boy was Vighnēṣvara. (*Vighnēṣvara, in Sanskrit, means 'Lord of obstacles' in the sense that He has the unique power of removing obstacles for those who please Him by their devotion. Vighnēṣvara's other names include Vināyaka, Gaṇēṣa, and Gaṇapati*) *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

Vighnēṣvara was Pārvati's son. Once, preparing to take a bath, Pārvati made a boy-like doll with flour paste, gave it life and told him to guard the entrance to the house and not let anyone in while she was bathing, Lord Ṣiva arrived after a successful battle against Asuras*, to greet Pārvati with the glad tidings. The boy Pārvati had

created stood in His way and would not let Ṣiva enter. Furious at being denied entrance to His own residence by a strange boy, Ṣiva tried to shove him aside and enter. The boy resisted Him. Ṣiva killed the boy using His trident and went into the house. Seeing Ṣiva inside the house, Pārvati realized that He must have killed the boy. Furious with Ṣiva, She told Him "You killed my darling boy. You have a choice – either revive him or else, I will destroy the whole world." Ṣiva sent His soldiers with instructions to cut off the head of the first living being they encounter that was sleeping with head facing north. Following His instructions to the letter, they cut off the head of an elephant sleeping with head pointing to the north. Ṣiva attached the elephant's head to the boy's body and revived him. The Dēvas praised and prayed to the boy. The boy is Vighnēṣvara, who was made the leader of Ṣiva's followers (*called Gaṇas*), and is also known as Gaṇapati or Gaṇēṣa. *Padma Purāṇa*

Vighnēṣvara was formed from the sky. Once upon a time, Asuras were dominant and the Dēvas and Munis approached Lord Ṣiva complaining of the harassment by Asuras and requested His advice on how to overcome their problem. Deep in thought about the problem, Ṣiva happened to raise His head slightly. At that instant, a beautiful image of Pārvati appeared to Him in the sky. Ṣiva then asked the sky "Water and earth have a physical form. Why is it that the sky does not?" Since viewing Pārvati's beauty made Him ask such a question, the sky took the form of a handsome, attractive boy and stood before Ṣiva. Fascinated by his good looks, even Pārvati stared at the boy admiringly. The fact that the boy's appearance aroused desire in Goddesses made Ṣiva angry. Ṣiva gave the boy a Ṣāpa* "You will have an elephant's

head, a fat belly and serpents will be your holy thread," The boy was transformed immediately by the Ṣāpa. He was Vighnēṣvara. Ṣiva was still not pacified. Sweat poured down His whole body. From the drops of sweat emerged beings with human bodies and various animal heads. The Dēvas finally managed to calm Ṣiva down. Ṣiva said that these beings (*called Gaṇas*) will be Vighnēṣvara's entourage and that Vighnēṣvara will be worshipped first in any religious ceremony. *Varāha Purāṇa*

The parents of Kumāraswāmi and Vighnēṣvara decided that it is time to arrange marriages for their children. But, uncertain as to which son should marry first, they told the two of them that the one who completes a trip around the earth would get married first. Kumāraswāmi took off on his speedy transport, a peacock. Vighnēṣvara, who rides a mouse, was worried about how he was going to complete such a trip, let alone win it. When he took a bath and returned to where His parents were, He found them sitting close together. After walking around them seven times, He announced that He had completed a circle around the earth. He explained that the Ṣāstras (*generic Sanskrit term for any body of knowledge, including the sciences and arts*) considered his circling of Ṣiva and Pārvati as equivalent to a revolution around the earth. Accepting His logic, His parents performed His marriage to Siddhi and Buddhi. Vighnēṣvara had a son named Kshēma by Siddhi and a son Lābha by Buddhi. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

After he killed Kārtavīrya (see **Jamadagni**), Paraṣurāma came to visit Lord Ṣiva. At the time, Ṣiva was in the bedroom with Pārvati. Vighnēṣvara, who was guarding the bedroom door, would not allow Paraṣurāma to enter the room. Paraṣurāma, saying "Who are

you to block me when I want to visit Lord Ṣiva?" scoffed at Him. The two of them had a scuffle. Vighnēṣvara coiled His trunk around Paraṣurāma and lifted him high in the air. Paraṣurāma, seeing the seven upper worlds from where Vighnēṣvara held him, was terrified. He hit Vighnēṣvara with his Paraṣu (*axe*). The blow broke one of Vighnēṣvara's tusks. He came to be known since then as Ēkadanta (*the one with a single tusk or tooth*). The noise of the broken tusk falling to the ground disturbed Ṣiva and Pārvati. They came out to see what was happening. Pārvati took Vighnēṣvara in Her arms to comfort Him and scolded Paraṣurāma. *Brahmanda Purana*

Once, Lord Vighnēṣwara, after eating a full meal, was going to pay His respects to Lord Ṣiva at night-fall. Observing His difficulty walking on account of the heavy meal He just ate, Chandra laughed. As Chandra was laughing, Vighnēṣwara's stomach burst open and many of the food items He ate fell out. Vighnēṣwara's stomach was stitched back using a snake as the thread. Pārvati, angry that Chandra was the cause of the embarrassing incident, gave a Ṣāpa that Chandra should not be seen and anyone who sees him will suffer false accusations. She informed Brahma of her Ṣāpa. Brahma informed the Dēvas. The Dēvas pleaded with Her to retract Her Ṣāpa because it is impossible not to see Chandra. She amended the Ṣāpa to apply only to those who see Chandra without hearing this story on the birthday of Vighnēṣwara, which is the fourth day after the new moon in the month of Bhādrapada. *Vighnēṣwara Charitam*

**Vijaya I** – Brother of Jaya. One of Lord Vishṇu's gate-keepers. (*see **Jaya** for the story of his and his brother's Ṣāpa* and three*

*reincarnations as Vishṇu's sworn enemies they underwent as a result*). *Bhāgavata*

**Vijaya II** – Wife of Bhumanyu (*son of Bharata; grandson of Dushyanta*). She had a son named Suhōtra (*ancestor of Suhōtra, son of Sahadēva*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vijaya III** – Wife of Sahadēva (*one of the twin sons of Mādri, second wife of King Pānḍu; each of the Pānḍavas had at least one wife he did not share with his brothers, in addition to Draupadi, shared by all five*). She had a son Suhōtra. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vijaya IV** – A nickname used by Arjuna during the incognito period. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vijaya V** – Son of Sudēva. His son was Ruruka. *Bhāgavata*

**Vijaya VI** – A king. Deceived by a minister of King Ṣurasēna, he gave his daughter in marriage to a serpent born to Ṣurasēna. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Vijitāṣva** – Eldest son of Emperor Pṛthu and his wife Archi. His brothers were Dhūmrakēṣa, Haryaṣva, Draviṇa, and Vṛka. Emperor Pṛthu had performed ninety nine Yāgas on the banks of the Sarasvati river in the land of Brahmāvarta. As he prepared to start the one hundredth, Indra*, fearing loss of his position, panicked and stole the sacrificial horse in order to prevent completion of the Yāga. Vijitāṣva chased after Indra. Indra, fearful of Vijitāṣva's retaliation, left the horse and disappeared. He acquired the name Vijitāṣva (*Sanskrit for 'he who won the horse'*) by defeating Indra and recovering his horse. Indra then came again and stealthily took back the horse. Sage Atri, who learned of

Indra's new theft, informed Vijitāṣva. Vijitāṣva defeated Indra again and recovered the horse. He ascended to the throne after Pṛthu. He was also known by the name Antardhāna. Vijitāṣva's wife was Sikhanḍini. They had three sons named Pāvaka, Pavamāna, and Ṣuchi. These were the Trētāgnis reborn. Vijitāṣva's second wife was Nabhasvati. Vijitāṣva and Nabhasvati had a son named Havirdhāna. *Bhāgavata*

**Vikarṇa** – Son of Gāndhāri and Dhṛtarāshṭra. When Duryōdhana ordered Prātikāmi to bring Draupadi to the Sabha (*court*), Draupadi posed a question to Prātikāmi (*the question: "Did my husband gamble and lose me before or after he gambled and lost himself?" If the answer was 'after', he would not have been a free agent anymore and had no right to bet her*) who related her question in the court. No one in court answered. Disregarding Draupadi's question, Duṣṣāsana dragged her by her hair into the court. Distressed by this gross injustice being committed by his brothers, Vikarṇa spoke up, saying "The elders such as Bhīshma have failed to speak. Draupadi posed a valid question. If none of the wise old men is willing to speak, I will adjudicate the issue." He expressed his opinion and criticized Duryōdhana. No one paid any attention to him. He was killed in the Mahā Bhārata war along with all the Kauravas. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vikrānta** – A king. His wife was Haimini. Immediately after the birth of their son Chaitra, a cat named Jātahāriṇi put the newborn baby of a Brahmin named Giribhadra in Haimini's bed, and Chaitra in the bed of the wife of a Brahmin named Bōdha in a city named Viṣāla. Believing the baby to be his own son, Vikrānta named him Ānanda and raised him. The boy, after some years, told Vikrānta

and his wife that he is not their son and that their son was growing up in Bōdha's house. Vikrānta then brought back his son Chaitra from Bōdha's house. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Vikshara** – Son of Anāyu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vikunṭha** – Wife of Ṣubhra who lived during the reign of Manu* Raivata. Lord Vishṇu was born as her son and acquired the name Vaikunṭha (*as did His abode*). *Bhāgavata*

**Vikunṭhana** – Son of Hasti and husband of Vasudēva. Their son was Ajamīḍha. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vimarda** – A king. He defeated Surāshṭra and acquired his kingdom. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Vimṣa** – Eldest son of Ikshvāku, the progenitor of the Sūrya (*solar; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Chandra, or lunar*) dynasty. He had a son named Vivimṣa. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vinaṣana** – A Tīrtha*. Once upon a time, Dwita, who had fallen into a well, performed a Yāga. The water of the holy river Sarasvati, entered the well (*and raised Dwita back to the surface*). The place thus became holy and named Vinaṣana. Balarāma (*older brother of Lord Kṛshṇa*) went here on pilgrimage. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vinata I** – Daughter of Dharaṇi and her husband Daksha Prajāpati*. She was a wife of Kaṣyapa Prajāpati of whom Kadruva was also a wife (*women who are married to the same man are known as Sapatnis in Sanskrit*). The two wives were pregnant at the same time. Kadruva's eggs broke and her children (*Nāga* or articulate serpents*) were born from them. Vinata's eggs remained

intact for a long time. Tired of waiting, Vinata broke one of her eggs. A half-formed boy, missing his lower half, was born from it. Blaming his mother for not letting him develop a complete body, the boy gave Vinata a Ṣāpa* that she would be her Sapatni's servant for a thousand years. Warning her not to hurry and break her second egg, the boy went away. His name was Anūra (*he became the chariot-driver for Sūrya, the Sun God*). Her second son was Garutmanta*.

She could not avoid servitude to her Sapatni due to the Ṣāpa by her son. (*The following is a different story of how Vinata had to be her Sapatni's servant. This and the previous story are within a few pages of the same canto, Ādi Parva, of the Mahā Bhārata*) Once, Vinata and Kadruva, strolling on the beach, saw Ucchaiṣrava (*Indra's* horse, which emerged when the Dēvas and Asuras churned the ocean of milk*). Vinata exclaimed "What a clean, pure white horse!" Kadruva asserted that there was a black area on the horse's tail. They argued violently and made a bet that whichever one of them was wrong will become the other's servant. As the sun was about to set and there was insufficient light to check out the horse, they agreed to return early the next morning and settle the bet. That night Kadruva first begged her children to help her win the bet (*she knew there was no black spot on the horse too*) and when they all refused, threatened them with a Ṣāpa. Finally, one of her sons coiled himself around the horse's tail, making a black spot. The next morning, the two Sapatnis went and checked the horse. Seeing a black area on the horse's tail, Vinata, unaware of the deception by her Sapatni, accepted that she had lost the bet and became Kadruva's servant. Garutmanta emerged from Vinata's

second egg after she had become Kadruva's servant. He was also serving Kadruva and her sons along with his mother. One day, after suffering a humiliation by Kadruva, he asked his mother "Why do we have to be servants of these relatives?" She narrated the story of her losing bet. Garutmanta then went to Kadruva's sons and asked them what they wanted for releasing himself and his mother from servitude. The serpents said they can win their freedom if he brings them Amṛtam*. Garutmanta brought them Amṛtam and won his mother's (*and his own*) release from servitude to Kadruva and her sons. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vinata II** – A Vānara*, sent eastward by Sugrīva to search for Sīta. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Vinda, Anuvinda** – Sons of Lord Kṛshṇa's paternal aunt Rājādhidēvi and her husband King Jayatsēna. They ruled the kingdom of Avanti. They owed allegiance to Duryōdhana. They fought on the Kaurava side in the Mahā Bhārata war and were killed by Arjuna.

When the Swayamvara* of their younger sister Mitravinda was announced, Kṛshṇa came and married her. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vindhya mountain** – Mountain that separates northern India (*called Āryāvarta, or Abode of Āryans in Sanskrit*) from south India. The Gods travel on this mountain as well as on the Himālaya and Mēru mountains. Once, noticing that Sūrya (*the Sun God*) circles the Mēru mountain, Vindhya questioned him as to why he does not circle him (*in the Purāṇas, mountains are anthropomorphed into men*). Sūrya replied that it was his fate to circle Mēru. Angered by Sūrya's response, Vindhya grew to an

enormous size in an attempt to block the path of Sūrya and Chandra (*the Moon God*). This stopped the course of day and night. Several Munis tried to persuade Vindhya to stop blocking Sūrya and Chandra from their appointed routes but failed. They sought the help of Sage Agastya. Agastya went to Vindhya and told him "I have to go on a pilgrimage to the south. Allow me to cross you." Vindhya retracted himself to his normal size. Agastya requested him to stay that way until he returned from the south. He never returned and to this day, Vindhya retains his low profile. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vindhyāvaḷi** – Wife of Emperor Bali. *Bhāgavata*

**Viprachitti** – (*Also known as Viprajitti*) Son of Kaṣyapa and his wife Danu. He married Simhika, sister of Hiraṇyakaṣipu. Their sons were Ṣalya, Nabha, Vātāpi, Ilvala, Andhaka, Naraka, Svarbhānu, and Dambha. They also had a daughter, Māhishmati. *Vishṇu Purāṇa; Ṣiva Purāṇa; Varāha Purāṇa*

**Vipula I** – A Muni. He had sons named Sukṛṣa and Tumbura. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Vipula II** – A Brahmin. Disciple of a Muni named Dēvaṣarma. Dēvaṣarma's wife was Ruchi. Indra* desired her and was stalking her. Dēvaṣarma, when he needed to attend a Yāga, had a disciple of his named Vipula stay with her to protect her from Indra. Vipula maintained a constant vigil on her, wherever she went. Seeking an easier way of protecting her, Vipula, using his spiritual power of Yōga, merged with her body and took control of her heart. Indra, looking at Vipula's body and noticing that Vipula was asleep, greeted Ruchi. Vipula responded from Ruchi's body, left her body

and berated Indra. Indra then disappeared. When Dēvaṣarma returned, Vipula told him that Indra had come. Dēvaṣarma praised him for protecting his wife from Indra and gave him boons. Some time later, Vipula, going out to gather flowers at his Guru's request, happened to see a man, his wife and six other men. They were gambling. Their wager was that the loser will suffer the same fate as Vipula. Thinking about what he heard, Vipula realized that using his spiritual power to occupy his Guru's wife's body and keeping that information from his Guru was a misdeed. He went back, related what he heard from the strangers, and asked "Who were those people?" Dēvaṣarma informed him that the couple were night and day, and the other six were the seasons, and that they see everything. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vīra** – Son of Anāyu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vīrabāhu** – The cemetery-keeper who bought Hariṣchandra. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Vīrabhadra** – Lord Ṣiva created him from a lock of His hair with the mission of destroying the Yāga being performed by His father-in-law Daksha Prajāpati*. Aided by Ṣiva's Gaṇas, he trampled the enclosure where the Yāga was being performed, and broke every object there. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Virādha I** – An Asura*. A Gandharva* named Tumburu was born as Virādha due to a Ṣāpa*. He lived in the Danḍaka (*covers parts of Chattisghar, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh states*) forest. When Sīta, Rāma and Lakshmaṇa were transiting this forest, he attacked them, proclaiming he will marry Sīta. Rāma and Lakshmaṇa killed him with their arrows. Thereby released from his Ṣāpa, he

resumed his original form and saluted them with a Namaskāra*. After advising them to visit a Muni named Ṣarabhanga, he went on his way. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Virādha II** – Son of Jaya and his wife Ṣatahrada. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Viraja I** – Mind-born son of Lord Vishṇu. After the Nīti Ṣāstra (*code of morality*) was formulated, Vishṇu created him for the purpose of propagating it among humanity. Viraja, however, did not wish to go to the earth. Kardama was his son. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Viraja II** – A female cowherd. Her sons became the seven oceans. She was very similar to Rādha in appearance. She and Kṛshṇa loved each other. Once, while they were together, making love, Rādha came upon them. Sudāma, Kṛshṇa's close friend and constant companion, was standing guard at the door and asked Rādha not to enter. Rādha pushed past him and entered the room. As soon as he saw her, Kṛshṇa vanished. Viraja transformed herself into the form of a river (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*). Kṛshṇa missed her very much, and unable to bear the pangs of separation, went to the river she had become and was crying. She then assumed her original form as a woman and embraced Kṛshṇa. She gave birth to seven sons by Kṛshṇa. One day, while the seven boys were playing, the youngest fought with his brothers. He then came crying to Viraja. She was with Kṛshṇa at the time. She left Kṛshṇa to take the youngest son to join his brothers. By the time Viraja returned hoping to rejoin Kṛshṇa, He had gone away. Blaming her sons for her separation from Kṛshṇa, in a fit of anger, she gave them a Ṣāpa* that they shall become oceans (*seems like a colourful story*

*to say that the oceans are 'born from' rivers*). She then also criticized Kṛshṇa in harsh terms. When Sudāma protested against her abuse of Kṛshṇa, she gave him a Ṣāpa that he shall be born as an Asura*. Sudāma took birth as the Asura Ṣankhachūḍa as a result. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Viraja III** – Son of Kadruva. A Nāga*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Viraja IV** – Son of Ganga. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Viraja V** – Disciple of Jātukarṇi. He learnt the part of the Ṛg Vēda codified by his Guru. *Bhāgavata*

**Vīrapāṇḍya** – King of the city of Madhura (*city in south India, different from Mathura in north India where Lord Kṛshṇa lived for many years after killng His evil uncle Kamsa*). His father was Ugrapāṇḍya. *Skānda Purāṇa*

**Vīrasēna I** – A king. While on a hunt, he mistook the sons of Sage Samvarta, who had covered themselves with deerskins, for deer, and killed them. Going near his kills, he realized they were children of a Muni. In order to be absolved from the sin of killing Brahmins, he performed a religious ritual called Varāha Vrata*. He attained Mukti* as a result. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Vīrasēna II** – King of Nishadha and father of Nala. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Virāṭa** – Ruler of country named Matsya (*Sanskrit for fish. Probably modern-day Bengal*). Ṣatānīka, Hēmavarma, and Sūryadatta were his younger brothers. Virāṭa's wife was Sudhēshṇa. They had a son Uttara and a daughter named Uttara. The Pāṇḍavas, during their incognito year, in disguise and bearing

false names in Virāṭa's city, served him in various functions. Even though Virāṭa was aware of the situation of the Pāṇḍavas, he was unable to recognise his new subjects.

King Virāṭa's brother-in-law Simhabala (*the real power behind the throne, propping up the weak but well-meaning and popular Virāṭa as a titular monarch*) tried to sexually assault Draupadi. She escaped him and ran to the king's Sabha (*court*). Afraid to oppose Simhabala, Virāṭa remained silent. Later, after hearing that Sairandhri's (*Draupadi's name during the incognito period*) husbands had killed Kīchaka (*another name of Simhabala*) and his younger brothers, he was afraid to let her stay in his palace any longer. Virāṭa asked his wife to send Sairandhri away. Virāṭa never displayed any courage or confidence. Suspecting that the Pāṇḍavas are hiding in Virāṭa's city, Duryōdhana and his cohorts attacked his kingdom to take away his cattle, to verify their suspicions (*and to impose another 13-year cycle of exile and incognito*). Virāṭa fought them and was defeated. Valala (*Bhīma's name at the time*) rescued him and brought him back. On his return, learning that his son Uttara had gone to fight the Kauravas, he was concerned for his safety. Kanku (*Dharmaraja's name in disguise*) assured him that as long as Bṛhannala (*Arjuna*) was with him, no harm could come to Uttara. Upset at hearing praise for the chariot-driver (*and eunuch*) instead of the prince, Virāṭa threw the dice (*Kanku instructed Virāṭa in many things, gambling being the favourite*) in his hand at Kanku.

The Pāṇḍavas' incognito year ended that day. The next day, assuming their normal (*royal*) appearance, the Pāṇḍavas arrived in court. Dharmarāja sat on the king's throne. Virāṭa, arriving

afterwards, seeing the man he thought of as a Brahmin in his service on the throne, asked loudly "Why is Kanku so arrogant?" He was then informed that Kanku, Valala, and Bṛhannala were really Dharmarāja, Bhīma and Arjuna respectively. Astonished and overjoyed by the revelation (*the Pānḍavas chose Virāṭa's city knowing that he was an ally and admirer of them*), Virāṭa deeply regretted his intemperate action in hitting Dharmarāja and prayed for his forgiveness, even offering him his kingdom. He also offered his daughter in marriage to Arjuna (*she was learning dance from him in his Bṛhannala role*). Arjuna suggested that she should marry his son instead. Uttara's marriage with Abhimanyu was then celebrated. Virāṭa fought on the Pānḍavas' side in the Mahā Bhārata war. Drōṇa killed him in the war. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vīravarma** – King of the city of Sārasvata. He captured the sacrificial horse of Dharmarāja's Aṣvamēdha Yāga*. Kṛshṇa and Arjuna defeated him and retrieved the horse. His daughter Sumālini chose Yama (*the God of Death*) as her husband. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Vīriṇi** – Wife of Ripunjaya. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Virōchana I** – Son of Prahlāda and his wife Dēvi. His son was Bali (see **Vāmana**). He and a man named Sudhanva, both wishing for the hand of the same woman in marriage, each argued that he was better qualified than the other in every way. They went to Prahlāda and asked him to judge who was the better qualified man for the woman they both wanted to marry. Prahlāda ruled that Sudhanva (*and not his own son*) was the better man. *Bhāgavata*

**Virōchana II** – Prime minister of King Durjaya. Accompanying

the king on a hunt, he went to the Āṣram of a Muni named Gauramukha. On Durjaya's direction, he went to the Muni and asked for the magic diamond that enabled the Muni to build a fabulous city and provide a sumptuous dinner for the king and his retinue. The Muni refused to part with it. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Virūpa** – Son of Ambarīsha. His son was Vṛshadaṣva. *Bhāgavata*

**Virūpāksha I** – Son of Mālyavanta. He fought in the Rāmāyaṇa war on Rāvaṇa's side. He was killed by Sugrīva in the war. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Virūpāksha II** – An Asura* who lived in the city of Madhuvraja. He was a friend of a crane (*articulate bird*) named Nāḍījangha. Once, Nāḍījangha sent to him a Brahmin who was seeking financial help. Even though he did not like helping that Brahmin whom he knew to be evil, he gave him some money because his friend wished it. On learning later that his friend Nāḍījangha was killed by the same Brahmin, he directed his Asura followers to catch and eat the Brahmin and performed funeral rites for his friend. Due to Lord Brahma's benevolence, Nāḍījangha came back to life when the milk foam from the mouth of a calf fell on the funeral pyre. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Viṣākha** – Once upon a time, Indra*, in a fight with Kumāraswāmi (*Lord Ṣiva's son*), deployed his signature weapon, the Vajrāyudha (*a thunderbolt, Indra's signature weapon, literally 'weapon of diamond'*). The weapon grazed Kumāraswāmi's right shoulder. A being with a ram's head and gold-coloured body was born from the spot. That being was Viṣākha. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Viṣākharūpa** – Son of a king named Pradyōtana. His son

Nandivardhana ruled his kingdom after him. *Bhāgavata*

**Viṣākhayūpa** – He learnt (*will learn*) Dharma (*the Righetous Path*) from Kalki (*the tenth, future incarnation of Lord Vishṇu*). *Kalki (Bhavishya) Purāṇa*

**Viṣāla I** – Son ofthe progenitor of the Sūrya (*solar; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Chandra, or lunar*) dynasty King Ikshvāku and the Apsara* Alambusa. The city he built was named Viṣāla after him. Indra*, pretending to be of service to Diti (*his step-mother*) and entering her womb while she was asleep, killed her fetus in this city. Viṣāla's son was Hēmachandra. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Viṣāla II** – Ruler of the city of Viṣāla. Once, he invited all the Brahmins of his city and asked them "I have made many donations of food. Why is it that I still have no sons? What must I do to beget sons?" They advised him to offer Piṇḍa (*a funeral oblation*) in Gaya (*a city in the State of Bihar, in north India. Gautama Buddha was from near Gaya*). When he performed the rite as advised, three men, one white, one red, and one black, appeared before him. When he asked them who they were, the white one replied "I was your father. The red one was your grandfather. We are in Naraka (*hell*) as we were guilty of harassing Brahmins and committing adultery. The black one was your great-grandfather. He is also in Naraka, having committed sins. You performed the funeral oblation in the holy Ganga due to some Puṇya* that I must have performed. As a result of the oblation you performed, we are able to leave Naraka and stopped to visit with you on our way to Pitṛ Lōka (*the world of ancestors*)." *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Viṣāla III** – Daughter of King Viṣāla. Avīkshit was one of the many princes who attended her Swayamvara*. The other princes, jealous of Avīkshit, ganged up on him and held him prisoner. Viṣāla refused to choose any prince other than Avīkshit. Avīkshit's father Karandhama arrived and effected his son's release. Karandhama, aware that Viṣāla loved his son, tried to convince Avīkshit to accept her choice and marry her. But Avīkshit was adamant that he could not marry a woman who had witnessed his defeat at the hands of other princes. Avīkshit then took a vow of celibacy and went away. Viṣāla, with her father's permission, went to the forest intending to perform Tapas*, hoping to marry Avīkshit at least in her next life by obtaining a boon.

As she kept losing weight due to the rigid discipline of Tapas, an emissary of the Dēvas came to her and told her "A great king will be born as your son. You need to keep your body well-nourished." She was extremely puzzled as to how she was to give birth to a son since the only man she ever wanted to marry had taken a vow of celibacy.

One day, while she was bathing in the Ganga river, the king of Nāgas* abducted her and took her to Nāga Lōka. There, the Nāgas surrounded her and prayed to her, saying "O Viṣāla! Your son will try to exterminate us serpents. Save us by persuading him to desist from killing us." Viṣāla promised to do as they requested. They heaped gifts of gold and diamond ornaments on her and returned her to earth.

After she returned from Nāga Lōka, an Asura* named Dṛḍhakēṣa was harassing her. She then screamed loudly, saying "I am the wife of Avīkshit and daughter-in-law of Karandhama.

Someone please help me!" Avīkshit, nearby on a hunt, heard her plaintive plea and killed the Asura. After killing Dṛḍhakēṣa, he requested the Dēvas for a boon. They granted that a son will be born to him and Viṣāla. Informed by the Dēvas that the woman he rescued from the Asura was, in fact, Viṣāla who had proclaimed her undying love for him, Avīkshit proceeded to his city together with Viṣāla, intending to marry her in accordance with religious rites. On their way, the Gandharva* king who was Viṣāla's father in her previous life met them, took them to his city and performed their wedding. A son, Marut, was born to them. When Marut started a campaign to destroy serpents, the serpents went to Viṣāla and begged her to help them as she had promised. She got her husband to persuade their son to refrain from his attack on serpents. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Viṣāla IV** – Son of Tṛṇabindu by his grand-daughter Alambusa. He built a city named Vaiṣāli. His son was Hēmachandra. *Vishṇu Purāṇa; Mahā Bhārata*

**Viṣalyakaraṇi** – A medicinal herb. Sugrīva used this herb to cleanse the bodies of Rāma and Lakshmaṇa of the poisons that were on the arrows with which Indrajit struck them. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vishaya** – Daughter of Dushṭabuddhi. One day, Vishaya happened to be strolling in the garden and saw a handsome young man, Chandrahāsa, asleep under a tree. Vishaya, noticing the letter he was carrying, took it from the sleeping Chandrahāsa, and read it. When she saw that her father asked her brother Madana to give Visham (*poison*) to Chandrahāsa, she wondered why such a

handsome boy was to be killed, and having fallen in love with Chandrahāsa, altered Visham to Vishaya and replaced the letter and went home. Chandrahāsa woke up soon thereafter and took the letter and delivered it to Madana. Seeing his father's direction to give Vishaya to the bearer of the letter, he performed his sister's marriage to Chandrahāsa. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Vishṇu** – Born as a result of sexual desire between Lord Ṣiva and Ṣakti (*the Supreme Being, generally known as Dēvi*). Ṣiva commanded Him to perform Tapas*. A stream of water formed on Vishṇu's body due to the exertion of His constant Tapas. Ṣiva gave Vishṇu the name Nārāyaṇa (*Nāra means water in Sanskrit*) as a result.

Once, Vishṇu and Brahma were arguing about which of them is superior. While they were arguing, a shining cylindrical object looking like an infinitely long pillar appeared before them. Wonderstruck by its appearance, they wanted to find the beginning and end of the object. Vishṇu, taking the form of a boar, went looking for the bottom and Brahma, as a swan, sought to find the top. They agreed that the one who succeeds in finding an end of the object will be worshipped by the other.

Vishṇu, as far as he went, could not find the bottom of the object. He returned, admitting defeat. Brahma came back and said he found the top. As per their agreement, Vishṇu humbly saluted Brahma with a Namaskara*. But then, Ṣiva appeared before them and said that Brahma had lied (*He would know because the object was a Ṣiva Linga*).

An Asura* named Jalandhara went to war against Indra*. Indra sought Lord Vishṇu's help. Vishṇu joined the fight against

Jalandhara but was unable to defeat him. Praising his courage and prowess, Vishṇu offered Jalandhara a boon. Jalandhara asked that Vishṇu live in his house along with His Consort Lakshmi. Vishṇu stopped fighting and went to Jalandhara's house. Sometime later, a battle occurred between Jalandhara and Lord Ṣiva. Jalandhara, intending to deceive Ṣiva, disguised himself as Ṣiva and with followers taking the form of Gaṇas (*Ṣiva's and Vighnēṣwara's guards*), went to Goddess Pārvati. One of the fake Gaṇas announced "O! Pārvati! Ṣiva is here to see you." He immediately froze. Realizing it is evil magic by Asuras, Pārvati 'thought of'* Vishṇu. Vishṇu appeared to Pārvati and promised to do whatever She wished for. Pārvati asked Him to seduce Jalandhara's wife. Vishṇu agreed to do as She requested and proceeded to Jalandhara's residence. In the meantime, Jalandhara's wife Vṛnda had a nightmare in which she saw her husband riding a bull and travelling south while his city was burning down. She saw other bad omens too. In a state of agitation, she was wandering aimlessly in the forest. Vishṇu at that time assumed the form of an old Muni and sat under a tree. Two Vānaras were sitting on a branch of the tree. Vṛnda approached the Muni and said to him "O! Great Sage! People like you know every thing. Is my husband safe? Please tell me." The fake Sage told her that her husband had been killed by Ṣiva. Grief-stricken, she begged him to restore her husband to life. The fake Muni agreed to bring her husband back from the dead using his spiritual power from Tapas. He took a dip in the nearby lake and emerged looking like Jalandhara. Believing that it was in fact her husband, Vṛnda embraced Him. The fake Jalandhara spoke endearing words to her and made love to her. She

discovered during love-making that he was not her husband. Feeling sad and bitterly humiliated, she gave Him a Ṣāpa saying "You shall suffer forced separation from your wife. Only Vānaras will help you." She then prepared a funeral pyre and immolated herself. Vishṇu just stood there, as if immobilized. The Dēvas came there, as did Ṣiva and Pārvati. They spread some seeds at the spot where Vṛnda had immolated herself. Tulasi (*a plant considered very holy and used in worship; particularly dear to Vishṇu*), Gooseberry, and Jasmine plants sprung up from them. Vṛnda's Ṣāpa was the reason Lord Vishṇu, in His incarnation as Rāma, lost His wife (*to abduction by Rāvaṇa*) and rescued her with the help of Sugrīva and his Vānara army.

Once, an Asura named Dambha was performing Tapas. Vishṇu appeared before him and gave him a boon that a son Ṣankhachūḍa, will be born to him. Ṣankhachūḍa performed Tapas and Brahma gave him a suit of armor as a boon. Emboldened and proud because of his armor, Ṣankhachūḍa attacked Indra and the Dēvas. Ṣiva battled him to assist the Dēvas but suffered defeat at Ṣankhachūḍa's hands. Ṣiva then prayed to Vishnu and begged Him to take away Ṣankhachūḍa's armor. Vishṇu took the form of an old Brahmin and ingratiated Himself to Ṣankhachūḍa. The Asura said to the Brahmin "I will give you anything you desire. Just ask." The fake Brahmin asked for Ṣankhachūḍa's armor. Ṣankhachūḍa gave it to Him and went away to war. Ṣiva killed him in battle. Vishṇu then disguised Himself as Ṣankhachūḍa, put on his armor and went to Ṣankhachūḍa's house. Overjoyed that her husband had returned triumphant in his wars, Ṣankhachūḍa's wife Tulasi, welcomed him with a sumptuous dinner. After dinner, she hugged

him and they made passionate love. During lovemaking she realized that he was not her husband, cried bitterly and gave Vishṇu a Ṣāpa that he would turn to stone. Vishṇu then prayed to Ṣiva. Ṣiva came there and said to Tulasi "You had performed Tapas (*in a prior life*) wishing for union with Vishṇu. That is the reason Vishṇu made love to you now. Your husband Ṣankhachūḍa was Krishna's friend and companion Sudāma. The Ṣāpa you gave Him is irreversible. Vishṇu will therefore become a stone named Sālagrāma. You will be a river named Ganḍaki. He will then be within you." Vishṇu thus became Sālagrāma (*the form in which he is worshipped by many devotees*). *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

(*Another version of the Ṣāpa that led to Rāma's separation from His wife and the Rāmāyaṇa war*) Once, Sage Nārada and his nephew Parvata both desired the hand of Ṣrīmati, daughter of King Ambarīsha, in marriage. Both Nārada and Parvata, each without the other knowing about it, approached Vishṇu and asked for the same boon, namely that his rival's face be turned into that of a monkey. Saying yes to each, Vishṇu gave both of them monkey faces. Unaware that his own face was also that of a monkey, they both confidently attended a Swayamvara* for Ṣrīmati. Vishṇu also went there but was visible only to Ṣrīmati. Ṣrīmati chose Vishṇu as her husband. Disappointed but not knowing whom Ṣrīmati had chosen, they returned home. Sometime later, they happened to see Ṣrīmati in Vishṇu's residence. Because He took away the woman each of them wanted to marry and caused them sadness from failure, they gave Vishṇu a Ṣāpa* saying "You will experience the grief of forced separation from your wife and will regain her only with the help of Vānaras*." It was as a result of this Ṣāpa that

Vishṇu took an incarnation as Rāma in which he suffered separation from His wife and needed the help of Vānaras to recover her. *Linga Purāṇa*

At the end of the last Praḷaya (*great deluge – signifies the end of life in the universe and preparation for the beginning of a new cycle of life*), Vishṇu was asleep on the ocean (*Vishṇu's sleep between the end of the world and a new beginning is special and is called Yōga Nidra, which is also the name of a Goddess who is in control of Vishṇu during that time*), Brahma was born from His navel and Asuras named Madhu and Kaiṭabha were born from His ears. When the Asuras started harassing Brahma, He prayed to Vishṇu, seeking His protection. Unable to wake up Vishṇu, He then prayed to Yōga Nidra and requested Her to leave Vishṇu's body. She did so and stood aside. Vishṇu then woke up and appraised of the situation, fought Madhu and Kaiṭabha. However hard He fought, they were defeating Him. Vishṇu then addressed the Asuras saying "I am alone, fighting the two of you. Let me rest for a while (*rules of engagement, even between sworn enemies, were much more civilized. Even in the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahā Bhārata wars, there was never any fighting between after sunset or before sunrise*). The fighting stopped for a while. After resting, Vishṇu summoned the Asuras and said "O Asuras! You cannot fight me. Apologise and seek my Ṣaraṇu*." They replied "You are the one who cannot fight us and should request our Ṣaraṇu. Do so and we will grant you a boon." Vishṇu said "In that case, give me a boon that you two will die (*this is another aspect that is incomprehensible in today's world; anyone offering to grant a boon had to give whatever was requested*). Madhu and Kaiṭabha,

who did not suspect that Vishṇu would make such an unlikely request for a boon (*but not able to save themselves by denying it*), unhappily asked him to kill them where there was no water (*hoping to escape death because the whole world was under water*). Vishnu then enlarged His thighs, placed the Asuras on the now dry thighs and killed them.

Vishṇu's transport is Garutmanta*. His signature weapon is the Chakra*. Sūrya (*the Sun God*) and Chandra (*the Moon God*) are His eyes. Lakshmi is His Consort.

Once, seeing a man named Rēvata riding a horse, Vishṇu called out to Lakshmi, saying "Come see how beautiful this horse is". Lakshmi, looking at the horse, would not take Her eyes off it. Vishṇu, after sometime, gave Her a Ṣāpa saying "You are staring at the horse without blinking your eyes. It appears that you are enamored with the shape of a horse. Take birth as a mare." She was saddened by the Ṣāpa. Vishṇu told Her "Pray to Ṣiva. You will be released from my Ṣāpa when a son is born to you." Lakshmi went to the Kailāsa mountain (*Lord Ṣiva's abode*) and prayed to Ṣiva. Ṣiva invited Vishṇu. Vishnu, taking the form of a horse Himself, went there and had sex with the mare (*Lakshmi*). The mare got pregnant and gave birth to a human boy. Lakshmi was instantly released from the Ṣāpa and resumed Her normal appearance. Lakshmi and Vishṇu returned home, leaving their son in the Āṣram of Sage Turvasa. The boy was Hayahaya.

Once, while He was alone with Lakshmi, Vishṇu looked at Her and laughed. She, in a fit of anger, gave Him a Ṣāpa that His head would be severed from His body. His head fell off His body (*due to their use of Amṛtam*, Vishṇu and other Dēvas are immortal;*

*literally losing His head does not cause Him to die*). The Dēvas brought the head of a horse and attached it to His neck. That is how Vishṇu became Hayagrīva (*Haya is Sanskrit for horse; Grīva is neck*).

Once, an argument arose among Munis as to whether Brahma, Vishṇu, or Ṣiva could grant Mukti*. The Munis sent Sage Bhṛgu to investigate and determine which of these three (*known as Trimūrti, Sanskrit for 'Trinity'*) could grant Mukti. Bhṛgu visited Vishṇu (*he had visited Brahma and Ṣiva earlier, gave them each a Ṣāpa before going to Vishṇu*) in Vaikunṭha. Lakshmi was on Vishṇu's chest at the time. Seeing the Sage, Vishṇu pushed Lakshmi aside and stood up and saluted Bhṛgu with a Namaskāra*. When Bhṛgu kicked Vishṇu, He did not get angry but instead, begged the Sage to forgive Him (*there is a story that Bhṛgu was extremely arrogant because he had an eye on the bottom of one foot. When he kicked Vishṇu, He plucked the eye from the foot and Bhṛgu lost his arrogance*). Bhṛgu returned to the Munis and reported that Vishṇu is the one who could grant Mukti.

Vishṇu is the one who protects the worlds. As He proclaimed in the Bhagavad Gīta during His Kṛshṇa Avatāra (*incarnation*), He would take incarnations whenever evil got the upper hand. During these incarnations, He was given many Ṣāpas, which resulted in His forced separation from His wife in his Rāma Avatāra. Once upon a time, during a war between the Dēvas and Asuras, the Asuras hid behind Sage Bhṛgu's wife. Vishṇu, realizing this, killed Bhṛgu's wife. In her dying moments, she gave Vishṇu one of those Ṣāpas He collected, saying "Not only will you suffer separation from your spouse but you will also suffer through many

incarnations in various bodies." *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

Whenever the Dēvas, facing great danger, are unable to think of a way out of their problems, they would run to Vishṇu and beg for His help. He, considering the protection of the Dēvas as His primary mission, would suggest remedies for their problems (*mostly attacks by some Asura with a powerful boon from Brahma or Ṣiva*). One such instance was when an Asura named Vṛtra, armed with a boon from Brahma that he could not be killed during the day or the night, neither on water nor land, neither by a living thing nor an inanimate object, was harassing Indra. Indra begged Vishṇu's Ṣaraṇu. Vishṇu advised him that armed as Vṛtra was with such a powerful boon, it would not be possible to defeat him by direct attack and that a ruse needs to be employed. He suggested that Indra strike up a friendship with Vṛtra, lull him into a false sense of security and kill him at sunset on the ocean shore, by hitting him with foam.

An Asura named Vṛka (*also known as Mura*) obtained a boon from Ṣiva that anything he (*Vṛka*) touches with his hand shall be shattered into a hundred pieces. As soon as he received the boon, he wanted to test its effect on Ṣiva Himself by touching His head. Ṣiva ran for His life and sought Vishṇu's Ṣaraṇu. Vṛka also arrived, chasing Ṣiva. Vishṇu stopped him and told him that Ṣiva will not be visible to him until he takes a bath and cleans himself up. Trusting Vishṇu, Vṛka went to a nearby pond and while bathing, touched his own head and died. *Bhāgavata*

Once, Garutmanta threatened to kill Sumukha, grandson of the Nāga* King Āryaka. Indra's chariot-driver was planning to give his daughter in marriage to Sumukha. Responding to the chariot-

driver's prayers, Indra and Vishṇu conferred immortality on Sumukha. This angered Garutmanta who berated Indra and boasted that he is carrying every thing on his feathers. Upset with the bragging by his transport, Vishṇu reminding him that it was He, Vishṇu, who makes Garutmanta move, placed His hand on the bird. This made Garutmanta unable to move and cured him of his arrogance. *Mahā Bhārata*

When Lakshmi saw Sage Bhṛgu kick Vishṇu on His chest (*the special place where She resides*) and watched Vishṇu aplogize to the Sage instead of punishing his ill-mannered behaviour, She got angry and took it as an insult to Herself. She left Vaikunṭha (*the world in which Vishṇu and Lakshmi reside*) and went to earth. Vishṇu also left Vaikunṭha and went to Ṣēshādri (*one of the seven mountains called Saptagiri, near Tirupati*). (*Vēnkaṭāchala Māhātmyam is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Vēnkaṭāchala Māhātmyam*

**Vishṇurāta** – He learnt the sequence and orbits in which the Dwādaṣa Ādityas (*twelve suns*) move from Ṣuka (*a Sage whose form is that of an articulate parrot*). *Bhāgavata*

**Vishṇuṣarma** – The name of Vishṇu when he takes an incarnation as a Brahmin at the end of the Kali Yuga (*the current era, which began at the end of the Mahā Bhārata war*). *Bhāgavata*

**Vishṇusāvarṇi** – Son of Dharmasāvarṇi. His son was Dēvasāvarṇi. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Vishṇuyaṣa** – Father of Kalki (*the future, tenth incarnation of Vishṇu*). His wife will be Sumati. *Kalki (Bhavishya) Purāṇa*

**Vishṭaraka** – A hunter. Once, as he was about to shoot an arrow at a deer, a Muni named Samyama, ran towards him shouting loudly,

“Do not shoot the deer! Do not kill living things! Stop!” The hunter replied, sounding like a Vēdāntic scholar “Am I killing the deer? I am only the instrument. The creator, Brahma, Himself is doing the killing. God’s law is like this. Each creature experiences the consequences of its Karma.” *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Vishṭi** – Daughter of Sūrya (*the Sun God*). She was a misformed, fierce-looking girl. Surya was worried if anyone would be willing to marry her. She urged her father to find a husband for her, reminding him that he would be at fault if he failed to give his daughter away in marriage. Sūrya arranged her marriage to Viṣvarūpa (*son of Viṣvakarma**). They had sons named Ganḍa, Atiganḍa, Raktāksha, Krōdhana, and Durmukha and a daughter named Harshaṇa. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Vishvaksēna I** – Commander of Lord Vishṇu’s forces. *Bhāgavata*

**Vishvaksēna II** – Son of Sage Ṣuka’s maternal grandson Brahmadatta and his wife Gōdēvi. His son was Udaksēna. *Bhāgavata*

**Viṣōka** – Chariot-driver of Bhīma. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Viṣravasu** – Son of Pulastya and Ilabila, daughter of Tṛṇabindu. He was named Viṣravasu since he was conceived while Pulastya was singing Vēdic hymns. From an early age he was disciplined, and performing intense Tapas*, became Brahma. He was the third Brahma. Sage Bharadvāja gave his daughter Dēvavarṇini in marriage to Viṣravasu. Vaiṣravaṇa, also nown as Kubēra (*the God of Wealth and the ruler of Yakshas*) was the son born to them. *Bhāgavata*

Pulastya resenting the fact that his son Vaiṣravaṇa performed

Tapas directed to his grandfather Brahma, created Viṣravasu from half of his own body and directed him to harm Vaiṣravaṇa. Learning of this, Vaiṣravaṇa (*Kubēra*) approached Viṣravasu and pleaded "O Dēva! I am like your son. Be kind to me." He also gave Viṣravasu three Asura women, Pushpōtkaṭa, Mālini, and Pāka. Viṣravasu fathered sons Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa by Pushpōtkaṭa, son Vibhīshaṇa by Mālini, and son Khara and daughter Ṣūrpaṇakha by Pāka. *Mahā Bhārata*

Once, while he was performing Tapas*, Sumāli and his daughter Kaikasi, riding a chariot, saw him. Intending to give his daughter to Viṣravasu, Sumāli sent her to him. As she was attending to Viṣravasu's needs, Viṣravasu asked her who she was. She replied "I am Sumāli's daughter Kaikasi. I came here desiring to beget a son. Please grant me one." He told her that since she expressed the desire for a son at sunset (*instead of the night, which was considered the only appropriate time for sexual desire*), her sons will be Asuras*. Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarṇa, Vibhīshaṇa, and Ṣūrpaṇakha were born to her by Viṣravasu. *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*

**Viṣva** – Daughter of Daksha and wife of Dharma. She was the mother of group of Dēvas known as Viṣvadēvas. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Viṣvagandha** – Son of Pṛthu, who was the son of Anēnasa. His son was Chandra (*not the Moon God, a king of the Ikshvāku dynasty*). *Bhāgavata*

**Viṣvakarma I** – Son born to a Vasu named Vastu by Angirasa. Chākshu, who became a Manu*, was born to him and his wife Ākṛti. *Bhāgavata*

**Viṣvakarma* II** – Son of a Manu* named Prabhāsa. His mother

was Yōgasiddhi, the younger sister of Bṛhaspati (*Guru of the Dēvas*). He married Prahlādini. Sangjna, wife of Sūrya (*the Sun God*), was a daughter of Viṣvakarma. Nala, a Vānara* in the Sabha (*court*) of Sugrīva (*king of Kishkindha, a Vānara country*), was Viṣvakarma's son. He had another son named Viṣvarūpa. Viṣvakarma built palaces, cities, chariots and weapons to fulfill the needs of the Dēvas. Once, Sangjna complained that she could not stand the heat of Sūrya. Viṣvakarma ground Sūrya using his grinding machine and used the filings to fashion Lord Vishṇu's signature weapon, the Chakra*. Once, Indra* directed him to build a city for the Pānḍavas. Viṣvakarma came to the earth and built the city of Indraprastha.

Once, while riding his chariot, he happened to see the Apsara* Ghṛtāchi who, wearing makeup and beautiful ornaments, was on her way to a rendezvous with a lover. Sexually aroused by her sight, he asked her to have sex with him. She refused. Angered by her rejection, he gave her a Ṣāpa* that she will be born to a Ṣūdra* woman. She countered with her own Ṣāpa that he will fall to earth. He begged her to retract the Ṣāpa. Brahma intervened and said that even though he will be born on earth, he will be a Brahmin. Born as a Brahmin, he was meditating in Prayāga (*holy city at the confluence of three holy rivers*). Ghṛtāchi was born as a female cowherd. Viṣvakarma saw her on the banks of a river near Prayāga. Remembering their history together and recognizing the cowherd as Ghṛtāchi, he had sex with her. The sons born to her became metal workers, carpenters and jewellers. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Viṣvakarma III** – A Prajāpati*. His daughter Barhishmati, was the

wife of Priyavrata. *Bhāgavata*

**Viṣvāmitra** – Son of Gādhi. Gādhi's daughter, Satyavati, asked for a boon from her husband Ṛchīka that a son be born to her and a son to her mother. Ṛchīka instructed that she should embrace a Mēḍi tree and her mother, a Rāvi tree. Forgetting the correct instruction, Satyavati embraced a Rāvi tree and her mother embraced the Mēḍi tree. When he found out that his wife and her mother reversed his instruction, Ṛchīka told them that Satyavati's son, though a Brahmin, would have the characteristics of a Kshatriya (*warrior or royal caste*) and that his mother-in-law's son will have the attributes of a Brahmin. As a result, Viṣvāmitra, even though a Kshatriya, had attributes and aptitudes typical of Brahmins.

Viṣvāmitra learnt archery from Kṛṣāṣva. Viṣvāmitra ascended the throne after Gādhi. One day, King Viṣvāmitra, tired after a long hunt in the forest, stopped at Sage Vasishṭha's Āṣram to rest. Vasishṭha, with the help of his Kāmadhēnu (*literally, a cow that provides whatever her owner wishes*), provided the king and his vast retinue dinner and other comforts fit for a king. Viṣvāmitra, surprised by the power of Vasishṭha's cow, wanted to take her away. Vasishṭha refused to part with the cow even though Viṣvāmitra offered one hundred thousand other cows in return (*the offer itself is arrogant and insulting because there was no limit to what the cow can give her owner, let alone a hundred thousand cows, which is why Viṣvāmitra coveted her*). When Viṣvāmitra tried to take her by force, a vast army emerged from the cow and drove Viṣvāmitra and his army away. From then on, Viṣvāmitra resented and hated Sage Vasishṭha. Realizing that

Vasishṭha's great power was spiritual and derived from his constant Tapas*, Viṣvāmitra himself became a Muni and performed intense Tapas. Becoming a Muni (*having given up his kingdom and all royal perks*), however, did not soften his attitude towards Vasishṭha and he continued to take every opportunity that came along to do harm to Vasishṭha. Visvamitra's Āṣram was named Siddhāṣram.

Once, Viṣvāmitra was performing Tapas. Indra*, as he usually did, sent the Apsara* Mēnaka to disrupt it. Viṣvāmitra did succumb to her charms. A daughter was born to him and Mēnaka. Her name was Ṣakuntala. Unhappy to find himself entangled in family life again, he abandoned Mēnaka and their daughter and went back to performing Tapas.

Gālava, the son of a Muni, was a disciple of Viṣvāmitra. He requested Viṣvāmitra to tell him what he would like as Guru Dakshiṇa*. Viṣvāmitra said he did not want anything. Sensing that the stubborn disciple would not take no for an answer, Viṣvāmitra asked for eight hundred horses that were white all over except for one blue ear. Gālava searched high and low and finding six hundred of them, he added Yayāti's daughter Mādhavi and offered them to Viṣvāmitra. Viṣvāmitra accepted the horses and Mādhavi as fulfillment of his desired Guru Dakshiṇa. He and Mādhavi had a son named Ashṭaka.

One year, there was an extremely severe famine in the land. Viṣvāmitra could not find food to feed his family. He put a noose around the neck of his son Gālava, paraded him around in the streets, asking if someone would give him some cows in return for the boy. A king named Satyavrata (see **Triṣanku**) undertook the

responsibility of supporting Viṣvāmitra's family and released Gālava from the noose. (*It is unusual to find an inconsistency such as this – Gālava as another Muni's son and as the son of Viṣvāmitra - in the same Purāṇa, i.e., Mahā Bhārata. The Mahā Bhārata is a huge compendium and probably took many years to write and multiple authors even though Sage Vyāsa is recognised as the sole author*)

In the interregnum between the epochs of Trēta and Dwāpara (*the second and third epochs in a four-epoch cycle, a Kalpa*), there was a terrible famine. Viṣvāmitra could not find any food. Searching for something to eat, he reached a village of untouchables. They had just killed a dog and ate some of the meat. While they were sleeping, Viṣvāmitra ate some of the dog meat. One of the people of the village woke up and asked him "Who are you?" Visvamitra identified himself truthfully. The untouchable, astonished, asked "Sir, you are a great Muni. Is it proper for you to eat dog meat?" They had a discussion on the subject and Viṣvāmitra asserted that any means are acceptable to save one's life. *Mahā Bhārata*

Once, Viṣvāmitra saw Ṣunaṣṣēpha, son of Ajīgarta, being taken as the sacrificial animal for a Yāga being performed by King Ambarīsha. The boy told Viṣvāmitra "My parents sold me as a sacrificial animal in return for one hundred thousand cows." Viṣvāmitra took pity on him. He summoned his sons and asked if one of them is willing to take Ṣunaṣṣēpha's place. They all refused. Viṣvāmitra taught Ṣunaṣṣēpha a Mantra (*powerful magical chant*). On reaching the place where the Yagjna was being performed, Ṣunaṣṣēpha was tied to a post. He then kept chanting the Mantra

taught him by Viṣvāmitra. Indra appeared and gave Ambarīsha the benefits of the Yagjna, making the sacrifice unnecessary and had Ṣunaṣṣēpha released.

Viṣvāmitra brought Ṣunaṣṣēpha to his home and told his sons "I will adopt this boy. He will be your elder brother. Treat him with respect." They laughed derisively at his words. Viṣvāmitra became angry and gave them a Ṣāpa* that they will become barbarians who will eat dog meat. *Bhāgavata; Rāmāyaṇa*

Of Viṣvāmitra's one hundred sons, one in the middle, Madhucchanda and all those younger than him, agreed to accept Sunassepha as their elder brother. Viṣvāmitra's family was split into two distinct branches on the basis of their acceptance of the adopted son.

In spite of constantly performing Tapas, Viṣvāmitra could not free himself from the vices of anger and a fiery temper. He was always thinking of ways of causing harm to Sage Vasishṭha. Intending to attack Vasishṭha, he 'thought of'* the river (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*) Sarasvati. As soon as he thought of her, she appeared before him and asked him what she could do for him. He commanded her to bring Vasishṭha to him. Afraid to reject his order, she went to Vasishṭha and explained to him the mission she was given. Vasishṭha, who tends to accommodate any requests made of him, sat on the banks of the river and asked her to take him there. Sarasvati took him to where Viṣvāmitra was waiting. While Viṣvāmitra was plotting his strategy to kill Vasishṭha, the flow of the river washed Vasishṭha away. Angry with the river, Viṣvāmitra gave her a Ṣāpa that she would become blood-red. *Bhāgavata*

A king of the Sūrya Vamṣa (*solar dynasty; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Chandra, or lunar*), Triṣanku (*originally named Satyavrata*) desired to go to heaven with his physical body and asked Vasishṭha to perform a Yāga to make it possible. Vasishṭha told him that no mortal person can go to heaven with their physical body. Triṣanku, angry with Vasishṭha, abused him and asked Vasishṭha's sons to make his wish true. They told him the same thing their father told him. He abused them too. They gave him a Ṣāpa that he would lose his (*Kshatriya*) caste and become a Chanḍāla (*untouchable*). Viṣvāmitra, mindful of the fact that Satyavrata assisted his family in their time of need, took pity on him and asked him what boon he would like. He asked Viṣvāmitra for the same thing that Vasishṭha refused to do for him. Viṣvāmitra agreed and summoned his disciples and other Munis to help him perform the Yāga. They all refused to cooperate. Viṣvāmitra undertook the task all by himself and used up a considerable portion of his spiritual power (*obtained by his Tapas over thousands of years*) to push Triṣanku bodily to heaven. Indra, unwilling to accept Triṣanku in his mortal body, pushed him back. Falling back to earth, Triṣanku prayed to Viṣvāmitra who stopped Triṣanku from falling and vowed to create another heaven, more resplendent than the original. Indra came to Viṣvāmitra and implored him not to create another heaven. Viṣvāmitra made Indra to agree to let Triṣanku to stay where his fall was interrupted, midway between heaven and earth.

Once, Viṣvāmitra, desirous of attaining the position of Brahmarshi (*highest in the hierarchy of Ṛshis*), was performing intense Tapas. The Dēvas sent the Apsara Rambha to disrupt the

Tapas. She approached the Sage hesitantly, fearful of his wrath. Viṣvāmitra, noticing that she came with the intent of disrupting his Tapas, gave her a Ṣāpa that she would be a rock for ten thousand years.

Once, some Asuras* including Mārīcha, were disrupting the Hōmas* at Viṣvāmitra's Āṣram, throwing blood and meat into the sacred fires and doing other evil magic. Even though Viṣvāmitra could easily kill them using his spiritual power from Tapas, he was unwilling to spend any of his power. Instead, he approached King Daṣaratha and requested him to send his sons Rāma and Lakshmaṇa to kill the Asuras. Even though concerned that his sons were just boys and might not be upto taking on Asuras, Daṣaratha overcame his unwillingness to part with his sons (*especially Rāma*) and sent them with Viṣvāmitra, primarily due to fear of the Muni's wrath. Viṣvāmitra taught the brothers many aspects of archery and the use of many Astras (*powerful weapons controlled by Mantras*). He led them to his Āṣram, Siddha. There Rāma and Lakshmaṇa killed Tāṭaka. Afterwards, Viṣvāmitra took Rāma and Lakshmaṇa to many places, while narrating stories of events at those places. On the way, Rāma happened to touch a rock with his foot and the rock turned into a woman, Ahalya, whose story was explained by Viṣvāmitra. Viṣvāmitra then took Rāma and Lakshmaṇa to the city of Mithila and introduced them to King Janaka. Viṣvāmitra asked Rāma to string Lord Ṣiva's bow which was an heirloom in Janaka's palace. Rāma, while attempting to string the bow, broke it. King Janaka gave his daughter Sīta in marriage to Rāma. Viṣvāmitra was chief among those who recognised Rāma's unique greatness and revealed it (*Rāma Himself*

*did not act like the incarnation of Lord Vishṇu that He was*). *Rāmāyaṇa*

Almost any action by Viṣvāmitra, benign or malign, had a single motivation – his hatred for Vasishṭha and the desire to harm him. Once, in Indra's Sabha (*court*), the question was raised, of whether there was anyone in the three worlds who always spoke the truth and never lied. Vasishṭha said that King Hariṣchandra on earth was such a man. Challenging his arch-enemy's assertion, Viṣvāmitra immediately said "What makes Hariṣchandra so great? He will never lie?" Intending to force Hariṣchandra to break a promise, Viṣvāmitra played havoc with his and his family's lives, asking for and taking all his wealth (*no king can refuse a Brahmin's request*), driving him out of his kingdom, making him sell his wife, and causing the death of his son (see **Hariṣchandra**).

When Viṣvāmitra was verbally abusing Hariṣchandra's wife Chandramati and driving her out of the city, some Dēvas named Viṣvas, passing by, saw him and said to each other "How cruel is this Muni!" Overhearing them, Viṣvāmitra gave them a Ṣāpa that they would be born as mortals on earth. They were born as the sons of the Pāṇḍavas as a result. *Mārkaṇḍēya Purāṇa*

As Viṣvāmitra, desirous of attaining the position of Brahmarshi, was performing intense Tapas, the Dēvas came to him and told him that they are willing to address him as Brahmarshi and that if Vasishṭha acknowledges him as a Brahmarshi, everyone else would also address him as Brahmarshi. Viṣvāmitra went to visit Vasishṭha. Vasishṭha greeted him "O! Rājarshi!" (*Just as Brahmins outrank the next higher caste, the Kshatriyas, Brahmarshi outranks Rājarshi, or royal Muni*) Offended and angered, Viṣvāmitra used

the spiritual power gained by Tapas to kill Vasishṭha's son. After performing Tapas again, Viṣvāmitra visited Vasishṭha. Again, Vasishṭha greeted him as Rājarshi. Viṣvāmitra then killed another son of Vasishṭha. In this manner, all the sons of Vasishṭha, except Ṣakti, were killed by Viṣvāmitra. Viṣvāmitra came to Vasishṭha one more time. Vasishṭha still addressed him as Rājarshi. Unwilling to kill Vasishṭha's one remaining son, Viṣvāmitra turned around and walked away, without even looking at Vasishṭha. Vasishṭha called out to him saying "Come, Brahmarshi!" Viṣvāmitra asked him why he called him Brahmarshi then and never before, Vasishṭha said "Because only now you walked away without getting angry. You became a Brahmarshi only when you completely freed yourself from anger." *Vichitra Rāmāyaṇa*

**Viṣvānara** – A Brahmin. His wife was Ṣuchishmati. He prayed to Lord Ṣiva and begat a son. The son was Vaiṣvānara (see **Agni**). (*Kāṣi Khanḍa is a 'Sthala Purāṇa'**.) *Kāṣi Khanḍa*

**Viṣvarūpa I** – Son of Viṣvakarma*. He married Vishṭi, daughter of Sūrya (*the Sun God*). They had sons named Ganḍa, Atiganḍa, Raktāksha, Krōdhana, and Durmukha and a daughter named Harshaṇa. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Viṣvarūpa II** – He was the son of an Asura* woman, Rachana. Once, Bṛhaspati (*the Guru and priest of the Dēvas*) was angry with Indra* and disappeared. During his absence, Asuras attacked Indra's city. Indra and other Dēvas prayed to Viṣvarūpa, who was performing Tapas*, and brought him to act as their priest. By the power of a Mantra "Ṣrimannārāyaṇa Kavacha", Viṣvarūpa doubled the resources of the Dēvas. The Dēvas were then able to defeat the

Asuras. *Bhāgavata*

**Viṣvarūpa III** – Son of Twashṭa Prajāpati*. He had three heads. He would use one head to drink Sōma, another to drink alcohol and the third to eat food. Indra* and the Dēvas worshipped him, regarding him as their Guru. The Asuras*, to whom he was a cousin, also worshipped him and he would share with them the fruits of Yāgas which he received along with the Dēvas. Indra, upset by his fraternizing with the enemy, severed his heads. One of the severed heads became a Chātaka (*a bird that lives only on rain drops*) and the other two became partridges. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Viṣvasaha** – Son of Mūlaka (see **Nārī Kavacha**) and father of Khaṭvānga. *Bhāgavata*

**Viṣvasāhya** – Son of Mahāsvanta and father of Mahābala. *Bhāgavata*

**Viṣvasakha** – Son of King Vyushitāṣva and father of Hiraṇyanābha. *Raghu Vamṣa*

**Viṣvāvasu I** – A Gandharva* king. A daughter named Pramadvara was born to him and the Apsara* Mēnaka. Both parents of the girl abandoned her and went away. Viṣvāvasu had a Vīṇa (*a seven-stringed musical instrument, most likely the most ancient*) named Bṛhati. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Viṣvāvasu II** – A Gandharva*. He once saw Dēvahūti and felt lust for her. The sin of coveting a married woman caused him to fall and become mortal. *Bhāgavata*

**Viṣvāvasu III** – Son of Jamadagni. Suspecting his wife of infidelity, Jamadagni asked Viṣvāvasu and three of his brothers to

kill her. When they refused to obey, Jamadagni gave them a Ṣāpa*. After the youngest son Paraṣurāma did kill his mother, Jamadagni withdrew the Ṣāpa of his sons. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vītahavya** – A king of the Ṣaryāti dynasty. He had the name Hayahaya as well. He ruled the kingdom of Vatsa. He had ten wives and a hundred sons. His sons killed the king of Kāṣi*, Haryaṣva, and his son Sudēva. They defeated Divōdās, the son of Sudēva. To avenge these actions by Vītahavya's sons, Pratardama, son of Divōdās, killed Vītahavya's sons and planned to kill Vītahavya as well. Vītahavya ran away and took refuge in the Āṣram of Sage Bhṛgu. Pratardama followed him to the Āṣram. Pratardama announced his intention to kill Vītahavya. Bhṛgu told him that no one born in the Kshatriya caste was in his Āṣram. Pratardama, believing that the humiliation of having to renounce his birth as a Kshatriya to save his life was enough punishment for Vītahavya, returned home. Vītahavya became a Brahmin because Bhṛgu proclaimed him as a Brahmin. He had a son named Gṛtsnamada. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vītihōtra I** – Son of King Indrasēna and father of Sumati. *Bhāgavata*

**Vītihōtra II** – Son of Sukumāra and father of Bharga. *Bhāgavata*

**Vītihōtra III** – He belonged to the lineage of Kārtavīrya. He was the eldest son of Tāḷajangha. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vivimṣa** – Son of Vimṣa. He had five sons, of whom the eldest was Khanīnētra. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vivimṣati** – Son of Chākshusha Manu* and father of Rambhu.

*Bhāgavata*

**Vṛddhakanyāṣram** – A Tīrtha* (*in Sanskrit, Vṛddha – old; Kanya – virgin or specifically, 'old spinster'*). It was the place where a Muni named Khani, of the lineage of Garga, gained a daughter by the power of his Tapas*, and brought her up before dying and going to heaven. The daughter never got married and grew old, performing Tapas. Her goal was to go to heaven. Sage Nārada appeared before her and told her that she should not go to heaven without ever having married. She chose the son of Gālava (*son of Sage Viṣvāmitra*) as her husband and gave up one half of the results of her long Tapas to look like a young, beautiful woman. She and her husband made a pre-nuptial agreement that they would spend only one night as a married couple. She left after the one night and went away. He stayed one day at the place and observed a fast. He attained Mukti* as a result of the holiness of the Tīrtha. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vṛddhakshatra** – Father of Saindhava (*brother-in-law of Duryōdhana*). When Saindhava, during his boyhood, was playing outside, Ākāṣavāṇi* proclaimed that Saindhava would be killed while he was inattentive in the middle of war. Vṛddhakshatra heard these words and was saddened to learn that the son he begat by performing Tapas* had such misfortune awaiting him. Grief-stricken, he announced a Ṣāpa* that the head of whoever causes his son's head to fall to the ground will shatter into a hundred pieces. Lord Kṛshṇa was aware of this Ṣāpa. He told Arjuna often that he must kill Saindhava in such a manner that the severed head will not fall on the ground. When the time came, Arjuna used the special power of the Pāṣupatāstra (*which he obtained from Lord*

*Ṣiva*) to make Saindhava's severed head to fall in the lap of his father who was deep in meditation. When something fell into his lap, Vṛddhakshatra, startled, dropped it on the ground. His head shattered into pieces, as a result of his own Ṣāpa. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vṛddhaṣarma I** – Son of Āyu and his wife Svarbhānavi. Nahusha was his brother. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vṛddhaṣarma II** – He was the king of Karūsha. He married Ṣrutadēvi, sister of Kunti (*mother of the three elder Pānḍavas*). Their son was Dantavaktra. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vṛddhaṣarma III** – A Brahmin. He once found Sage Ananta who had been washed ashore, took him to his home and gave him his daughter Chārumati in marriage. *Kalki (Bhavishya) Purāṇa*

**Vṛka I** – Son of Asura* named Ṣuka. He asked Sage Nārada "Which God should I worship in order to obtain beneficial results the fastest?" Nārada told him "Lord Ṣiva is the one who bestows gifts the fastest. Other Asuras including Bāṇa achieved their objectives by praying to Ṣiva. You should also pray to Ṣiva." Vṛka then went to the Kshētra (*Tīrtha**) called Kēdāra, and while praying to Ṣiva, proceeded to cut pieces of his flesh and throw them in the sacrificial fire. When he was about to cut his head and put it in the fire, Ṣiva appeared and asked him to choose the boon he would like to receive. Vṛka asked that anything on which he places his hand shall disintegrate into a hundred pieces. Ṣiva granted the boon. As soon as he received the boon, Vṛka wanted to test its effect on Ṣiva Himself by touching His head. Ṣiva ran for His life and sought Vishṇu's protection. Vṛka also arrived, chasing Ṣiva. Vishṇu stopped him and told him that Ṣiva will not be visible

to him until he takes a bath and cleans himself up. Trusting Vishṇu, Vṛka went to a nearby pond and while bathing, touched his own head and died. *Bhāgavata*

**Vṛka II** – Younger brother of Ṣakuni (*uncle of Duryōdhana*). Arjuna killed him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vṛka III** – Son of Ruruka and father of Bāhuka. *Bhāgavata*

**Vṛka IV** – Son of Succhāya and her husband Ṣishṭi. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Vṛka V** – Son of the king of Pānchāla. He joined the Pānḍava side in the Mahā Bhārata war. During the war, he fought against Drōṇa (*the Guru of the Kauravas*) alongside his uncle Satyajit. Drōṇa killed him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vṛkaratha** – Younger brother of Karṇa. Arjuna killed him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vṛkatējasa** – Son of Succhāya and her husband Ṣishṭi. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Vṛkshaka** – Daughter of Sage Bhṛgu. She became a widow at a very young age. She attained afterlife in Puṇya* Lōka (*afterlife abode of the souls of the righteous*) by performing the ritual of Māgha Snāna (*Sanskrit for 'bathing in the month of Māgha'*) every year. Once, the Asura* brothers Sunda and Upasunda were harassing the Dēvas, Brahma invoked her for their destruction. Vṛkshaka came to him as an extremely beautiful woman. Brahma gave her the name Tilōttama. *Padma Purāṇa*

**Vṛnda –** Daughter of Kālanēmi. Wife of the Asura* Jalandhara. Once, a battle occurred between Jalandhara and Lord Ṣiva.

Jalandhara, intending to deceive Ṣiva, disguised himself as Ṣiva and with followers taking the form of Gaṇas (*Ṣiva's and Vighnēṣwara's guards*), went to Goddess Pārvati. One of the fake Gaṇas announced "O! Pārvati! Ṣiva is here to see you." He immediately froze. Realizing it is evil magic by Asuras, Pārvati 'thought of'* Vishṇu. Vishṇu appeared to Pārvati and promised to do whatever She needed. Pārvati asked Him to seduce Jalandhara's wife. Vishṇu agreed to do as She requested, and proceeded to Jalandhara's residence. In the meantime, Jalandhara's wife Vṛnda had a nightmare in which she saw her husband riding a bull and travelling south while his city was burning down. She saw other bad omens too. In a state of agitation, she was wandering aimlessly in the forest. Vishṇu at that time assumed the form of an old Muni and sat under a tree. Two Vānaras* were sitting on a branch of the tree. Vṛnda approached the Muni and said to him "O! Great Sage! People like you know every thing. Is my husband safe? Please tell me." The fake Sage told her that her husband had been killed by Ṣiva. Grief-stricken, she begged him to restore her husband to life. He agreed to bring him back from the dead using his spiritual power from Tapas*. He took a dip in the nearby lake and emerged looking like Jalandhara. Believing that it was in fact her husband, Vṛnda embraced Him. The fake Jalandhara spoke endearing words to her and made love to her. Realizing during lovemaking that he was not her husband, feeling sad and bitterly humiliated, she gave Him a Ṣāpa* saying "You shall suffer forced separation from your wife. Only Vānaras will help you." She then prepared a funeral pyre and immolated herself. Vishṇu just stood there, as if immobilized. The Dēvas came there, as did Ṣiva and Pārvati. They

spread some seeds at the spot where Vṛnda had immolated herself. Tulasi (*a plant considered very holy and used in worship; particularly dear to Vishṇu*), Gooseberry, and Jasmine plants sprung up from them. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Vṛshabha I**– Son of King Nābhi and his wife Sudēvi (*also known as Mēru Dēvi*), with aspects of Lord Vishṇu. He taught the way of reaching Paramahamsa (*the Supreme Being*) to scholars and Munis. *Bhāgavata*

**Vṛshabha II** – An Asura*. He had the form of a bull and was as tall as a mountain. He attacked Lord Kṛshṇa as He was enjoying the company of male and female cowherds. Kṛshṇa killed him. *Bhāgavata*

**Vṛshabha III** – An Asura*. He prayed to Lord Vishṇu and when He appeared, asked Him to fight him. Vishṇu killed him in a fight. The mountain on which he was killed is named Vṛshabhādri. (*Vēnkaṭāchala Māhātmyam is a 'Sthala Purāṇa*'*.) *Vēnkaṭāchala Māhātmyam*

**Vṛshabhānu** – A king of the lineage of Vishṇu (*Hari Vamṣa*). He married Bhananda's daughter Kaḷāvati. Their daughter was Rādha. *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*

**Vṛshādarbhi** – A king. Once, there was a terrible famine. The Saptarshis* and Arundhati, wandering around looking for food, gathered around the corpse of Nīla, son of Aja, which was being cremated, prepared to eat it. Vṛshādarbhi, seeing them, called out to them and said he would give them food. They declined his offer, saying they will not accept food from a king. The king went home, gave his minister (*likely a Brahmin, from whom the Sages*

*might accept help*) some artificial, golden fruit to take to them. The minister went and offered the fruit, but the Sages said they will not accept gold. The minister went back and informed Vṛshādarbhi of their refusal. The king, furious with the Sages now, had a Yāga performed. Kṛtti, a female Asura*, emerged from the sacred fire of the Yāga. The king ordered her to go to the Sages and attack them. By that time, the Saptarshis, accompanied by someone named Ṣunassakha, were gathering lotus stems to eat. When Kṛtti reached there, Ṣunassakha killed her. During the commotion, the lotus stems were nowhere to be seen. The Sages could not determine who took them. Each described the sin of which he would be guilty if he had stolen them. Ṣunassakha, though, said whoever took them was a great man. The Sages turned on him and accused him of taking the stems. Ṣunassakha revealed himself as Indra* and took them all to Indra Lōka. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vṛshadbhānu** – Wife of Hiraṇyāksha (*along with brother Hiraṇyakaṣipu, the first incarnation of Jaya and Vijaya, Lord Vishṇu's gate-keepers as Vishṇu's enemies due to a Sage's Ṣāpa**). *Bhāgavata*

**Vṛshadhra** – Son of Manu. Once, while hunting, he killed a Muni's Hōma* cow, mistaking her for a deer. The Muni's son, named Bābhravya, guarding the cow, angrily upbraided him. Vṛshadhra retorted that the Muni's son was talking crudely, like a Ṣūdra*. The Muni's son, saying "How dare you abuse me like this, in addition to killing our cow", gave Vṛshadhra a Ṣāpa * that he will be born as a Ṣūdra. Vṛshadhra gave him a counter-Ṣāpa. *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa*

**Vṛshadhwaja** – Son of the Manu* Indrasāvarṇi. He was a Bhakta (*devotee*) of Ṣiva. Once, he attacked Sūrya (*the Sun God*). Sūrya went to Vishṇu and Brahma and complained. They told him "Vṛshadhwaja is a great devotee of Ṣiva. His sons will be mighty warriors. It is not proper to insult him." Vṛshadhwaja demeaned worship of Vishṇu and Lakshmi in his zeal as a Bhakta of Ṣiva. The Dēvas, therefore, were afraid to give him a Ṣāpa*. But Sūrya gave him a Ṣāpa that he would be devoid of Lakshmi (*wealth, of which Lakshmi is the Goddess*). Furious that he dared to give His Bhakta a Ṣāpa, Ṣiva went on the warpath against Sūrya. Terrified, Sūrya sought the Ṣaraṇu* of his father, Kaṣyapa. Kaṣyapa sought the Ṣaraṇu of Brahma. Brahma, in turn, ran to Vishṇu. Chasing all these, Ṣiva also went to Vishṇu. Learning of the reason for Ṣiva's visit, Vishṇu told Ṣiva "During the short time here while you were all rushing to me, thousands of years have passed on earth. Vṛshadhwaja died a long time ago. His sons, impoverished by the absence of Lakshmi due to Sūrya's Ṣāpa, are performing Tapas directed towards Lakshmi. Please calm down." Vṛshadhwaja's sons were Dharmadhwaja and Vṛshadhwaja. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Vṛshaka** – Brother of Ṣakuni (*maternal uncle of Duryōdhana*). Arjuna defeated him in the war. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vṛshakētu** – Son of Karṇa (*Kunti's unacknowledged eldest son, by Sūrya, before her marriage*). Dharmarāja, having learnt that Yauvanāṣva had a horse that was suitable for use in the planned Aṣvamēdha Yāga*, sent his brother Bhīma to bring the horse. His grandson Mēghavarṇa (*son of Ghaṭōtkacha*) accompanied Bhīma, and using Asura* magic, stole the horse. Yauvanāṣva, learning of the theft of his horse, attacked and defeated Mēghavarṇa as well as

Vṛshakētu, who came to his aid. Then Bhīma came and defeated the king. While Yauvanāṣva was unconscious, his son Suvēga arrived on the scene and joined the fight. Vṛshakētu, on regaining consciousness, saw Yauvanāṣva and Mēghavarṇa lying dead and prayed that these brave men be brought back to life. When they were revived, he made peace between them. Yauvanāṣva, learning that it was Bhīma who came seeking a horse suitable for Dharmarāja's Yāga, gave them the horse and much wealth. Later, King Anusālva (*younger brother of Sālva*) captured the Yāga horse. Vṛshakētu and Pradyumna (*son of Kṛshṇa*) went, defeated Anusālva and retrieved the horse. Afterwards, Vṛshakētu followed the horse. He was eventually killed by Babhruvāhana (*Son of Arjuna and Chitrāngada; each of the Pānḍavas had at least one other wife for himself alone, in addition to Draupadi, whom they all shared*). *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Vṛshala I** – A king. He sent his men to capture and bring a man to be sacrificed to Goddess Kāḷi. They brought the son of a Brahmin named Angirasa, who they found wandering around like a madman (*he was Jaḍabharata, son of Ṛshabha in a prior life*). When they took him to the Kāḷi temple and attempted to sacrifice him, Goddess Kāḷi materialized, killed Vṛshala and his minions and released the Brahmin. *Bhāgavata*

**Vṛshala II** – An Andhra man. He served King Suṣarma. He killed the king and took over the kingdom. His younger brother Kṛshṇa (*not Lord Vishṇu's ninth incarnation. Kṛshṇa, meaning 'dark or black' was a fairly common name; it was Draupadi's given name, for instance*) succeeded him to the throne. *Bhāgavata*

**Vṛshali** – Servant maid of a Brahmin named Ajāmiḷa. This Brahmin abandoned his wife and constantly indulged in sex with the servant maid. *Bhāgavata*

**Vṛshaparva I** – An Asura* king. Son of Kaṣyapa and one of his wives, Danu. Ṣarmishṭa was his daughter. Ṣukra (*the Guru of the Asuras*) used to live in his city. Once, in retaliation for an insult by Ṣarmishṭa, Ṣukra's daughter Dēvayāni refused to live in Vṛshaparva's city. Unwilling to be separated from his daughter, Ṣukra also left the city. Learning of this, Vṛshaparva begged Ṣukra to return to his city as part of a deal with his daughter becoming the servant of Dēvayāni. He thus succeeded in bringing the Guru back. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vṛshaparva II** – A Rājarshi (*royal sage*). The Pānḍavas stayed in his Āṣram for a few days during their exile in the forest. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vṛshasēna** – Son of Karṇa. He fought fiercely in the Mahā Bhārata war before Arjuna killed him. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vṛshṇi I** – Son of Sātvata. *Bhāgavata*

**Vṛshṇi II** – Eldest of the one hundred sons of Vṛshṇa, who was the son of Madhu. *Bhāgavata*

**Vṛshṇi III** – Son of Bhajamāna. Nimrōchi and Kankaṇa were his brothers. *Bhāgavata*

**Vṛta** – Son of Anāyu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vṛtra** – An Asura*. Tvashṭa Prajāpati* created Vṛtra to avenge the death of his son Viṣvarūpa at the hands of Indra*. Vṛtra prayed to Lord Brahma and obtained a boon that he could not be killed

during the day or the night, neither on water nor land, neither by a living thing nor an inanimate object. Vṛtra and Indra engaged in a fierce battle. Eventually, Indra ran away in fear and sought Ṣaraṇu* of Lord Vishṇu. Lord Vishṇu advised Indra that Vṛtra was very strong and a plan to kill him needs to be devised, and told Indra to make friends with Vṛtra in the meantime. Some Munis helped Indra make friends with Vṛtra. Indra pretended to be Vṛtra's friend. Vṛtra trusted him.

Vṛtra would grow stronger as he continued fighting, instead of tiring and becoming weaker. Munis and the Dēvas prayed to Lord Ṣiva for protection from Vṛtra. Ṣiva explained to them that the reason Vṛtra's strength increases during a battle is that he had performed Tapas* for twenty thousand years directed towards Lord Brahma, but assured them that He, Ṣiva, will drain the Asura's strength. Ṣiva's Tēja* converted itself into a high fever and attacked Vṛtra. Vṛtra was totally drained of his energy as a result. Ṣukra (*Guru of the Asuras*) then came to the defeated Vṛtra and asked him "Why do you seem unperturbed by your defeat?" Vṛtra replied "Wealth and poverty come and go over time. Only the ignorant become happy or sad based on fortune. I do not let them affect me." Ṣukra argued with him, with the intent of testing his resolve. Vṛtra remained steadfast in not desiring anything. Saying he had seen Vishṇu during his battles, asked the Guru to describe the greatness and power (*Mahima, another complex concept that does not translate well into modern languages*) of Vishṇu, and ways of reaching Him. Just then, Sage Sanatkumāra (*a mind-born son of Brahma*) came there. Ṣukra requested the Sage to describe the Mahima of Vishṇu. Sanatkumāra did. Vṛtra ended his life and

attained Mukti*. *Mahā Bhārata*

Vṛtra was King Chitrakētu in a previous life. *Bhāgavata*

**Vṛtta** – Son of Succhāya and her husband Ṣishṭi. *Matsya Purāṇa*

**Vyāghradatta** – Son of the king of Magadha (*ancient country in central India*). He fought in the Mahā Bhārata war on the Kaurava side and was killed in the war. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Vyāghrēṣwara** – Once upon a time, an Asura* named Dundubhi was killing and eating devotees who came to the Viṣvēswara (*Lord Ṣiva*) Temple in the city of Kāṣi*. Ṣiva took the form of a Vyāghra (*tiger*) and killed the Asura to protect the devotees. Ṣiva thereby came to be known as Vyāghrēṣwara. *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Vyōma** – An Asura, son of Maya*. Kamsa (*evil uncle of Lord Kṛshṇa*) sent him to kill Kṛshṇa. He abducted some cowherd boys, imprisoned them in a mountain cave and blocked the cave entrance with a huge boulder. Kṛshṇa battled and killed him and rescued the boys. *Bhāgavata*

**Vyushitāṣva I** – A king of the Raghu dynasty (*of which the most illustrious scion was Lord Rāma Himself*). He was the son of Ṣankhaṇa. He begat a son named Viṣvasakha by praying to Viṣvēswara (*the name of Lord Ṣiva in the Temple of Benares*). *Raghu Vamṣa*

**Vyushitāṣva II** – A king of the Paura dynasty. He had performed a hundred Yāgas, but became sick and died as a result of his promiscuous indulgence in sex. His wife Bhadra cried bitterly while embracing her husband's corpse, wailing that she could not live without having children. A disembodied voice arose from the

husband’s corpse and advised her that she would have a child if she contemplated her husband on the eighth and fourteenth day after she menstruated. She did so and begat a child. Kākshīvati was the daughter born thus. *Mahā Bhārata*

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**Yadu I** – Son of Dēvayāni and King Yayāti. His father asked him to give him (*Yayāti*) his (*Yadu's*) youth and take Yayāti's old age. Yadu refused. Yayāti then gave Yadu a Ṣāpa* that he and his descendants will be ineligible to be kings. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Yadu II** – Son of Uparicharavasu. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Yagjna I** – Maternal grandson of Svāyambhu Manu*. Svāyambhu raised him. Svāyambhu and his wife Ṣatarūpa eventually gave up family life and were in Tapōvana* performing Tapas* on the banks of the Sunanda river. When some Asuras* attacked them, Yagjna killed the Asuras. *Bhāgavata*

**Yagjna II**– Son of Ākūti and Ruchi Prajāpati*. Since he was the oldest son, Ruchi prepared to coronate him but Yagjna said "Kings crave power. It is not the right path for one who desires Mukti", and left for Tapōvana*. He had Amṣa (*this Sanskrit word is difficult to translate. One dictionary gives "a share" as the primary meaning. It could be taken to mean that it is short of a full incarnation*) of Lord Vishṇu. His sister Dakshiṇa was born with aspects of Lakshmi. They got married and had sons named Tōsha, Pratōsha, Santōsha, Bhadra, Idhma, Kavi, Vibhu, Vahni,

Sudēva, and Rōchana. *Bhāgavata*

**Yagjnadatta** – A Brahmin boy. Once, he was collecting water from a pond for his aged parents. Daṣaratha (*Rāma's father*) who was nearby, mistook him for an elephant and shot an arrow at him. The boy fell to the ground, crying loudly from the pain. Daṣaratha approached him and realized he had hit a human and not an elephant. Yagjnadatta died after asking Daṣaratha to take the water to his aged parents suffering from intense thirst. (*The parents, on hearing that their son died at the hands of Daṣaratha, die of grief after giving him a Ṣāpa* that he too would suffer separation from his beloved son and die of grief.*) *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Yagjnadatta's son** – A Brahmin named Yagjnadatta (*different person than the boy in the story from the Rāmāyaṇa*) was a man of good moral character. After being childless for a long time, he had a son. The son turned out to be a bad person and a thief who frequented houses of ill repute. Yagjnadatta tried to discipline his son but his wife was pampering the boy. Finally, unable to control his son due to his wife's interference, Yagjnadatta abandoned both wife and son. The son could not even obtain food. He saw a man complete worship of Lord Ṣiva and put away the Prasāda (*food offering to a God that is thought to confer blessings and good fortune on those eating it, even if they were not the worshippers*). He stole and ate the Prasāda. Soldiers were about to capture him but the fact that he ate Ṣiva Prasāda made him invisible to them. Eventually as he got old and was about to die, soldiers of Yama (*the God of Death, who would take a soul to hell, to suffer various punishments*) and of Vishṇu (*who would take the soul to heaven to enjoy the fruits accruing because of the person's good*

*deeds or Puṇya**) both arrived. The two groups argued about which of them should take the man's soul. In the end, it was decided that the soldiers of Vishṇu should take his soul because he had once eaten Ṣiva Prasāda. In his next life, he was born as Dama, son of Prince Arindama. *Ṣiva Purāṇa*

**Yagjnakōpa** – Son of Mālyavanta (*grandfather of Rāvaṇa*). *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Yagjna Purusha** – Personification of the fruits of a Yagjna (*Yāga*). An aspect (*or incarnation, but not one of the ten famous ones*) of Lord Vishṇu. Once upon a time, He killed an Asura* named Jambha, who was desecrating Yagjnas. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Yāgjnyavalkya I** – Son of a Muni named Dēvarāta. Dēvarāta performed intense Tapas* directed towards Lord Ṣiva. Ṣiva appeared to him and asked him to choose a boon. Dēvarāta wished for a son like Ṣiva. Ṣiva told the Muni that there was no one like Him and that He would Himself be born as Dēvarāta's son to spread knowledge of the complete Yajur Vēda on earth. The Muni returned home and performed the Yāga. A child, bright as the Sun, appeared on the Yāga platform. Dēvarāta raised him and gave him the name Yāgjnyavalkya. Yāgjnyavalkya learnt the Ṛg Vēda from Bāshkala, a disciple of Pyla; Sāma Vēda, which had a thousand parts, from a Muni named Jaimini; Atharva Vēda from Mahāmuni; and the complete Yajur Vēda including all its parts from Sage Vaiṣampāyana. During the time when Yāgjnyavalkya was a disciple of Vaiṣampāyana, Vaiṣampāyana would send his disciples, one by one, to King Janaka's house as his guests. One day, after dining at Janaka's house, Yāgjnyavalkya took some Akshatas (*holy rice,*

*coated in turmeric)* in his hand, went to the Sabha (*court*) and asked a guard to summon the king. The guard informed him that the king was away on a hunt. Then he asked that the queen be summoned. The guard informed him that the queen was unclean (*having a period*). Yāgjnyavalkya then sprinkled the Akshatas on the king's throne and in the horse stable. The places where he threw the Akshatas became resplendent with buds and flowers. The king, on his return, was astonished and desirous of seeing the one who possessed such wonderful power, went to him and became very happy listening to his teachings. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Yāgjnyavalkya II** – Son of a Muni named Brahmarāta. He was a disciple of Sage Vaiṣampāyana. King Janaka once invited many Munis to a Yāga he was performing to felicitate the greatest among them. He was unable to judge their greatness on his own. He therefore addressed them saying "Sirs, I intend to present the most outstanding Muni among you with this large pile of money. I request you to decide among yourselves who is the greatest Muni." They started quarreling, each one shouting that he was the greatest. Proclaiming he was the greatest, Yāgjnyavalkya directed his disciples to carry away the pile of money. The Brahmins gathered there became jealous and started arguing with him. Yāgjnyavalkya won all the arguments. Then a Muni named Sākalya challenged him to an argument, with the cost of defeat set as death. Yāgjnyavalkya correctly answered all thousand questions Sākalya posed to him. Sākalya in his turn was unable to answer even one of Yāgjnyavalkya's questions.

Once upon a time, some Munis gathered at the Mēru mountain and issued a proclamation that all Munis must come there within a

week and that anyone who fails to arrive will be tagged with the sin of Brahmahatya (*murdering a Brahmin*). Vaiṣampāyana was unable to comply. Summoning all his disciples, he said "I have been tagged with the sin of Brahmahatya and it is unbearable. Will one of you take it from me?" As he was asking the disciples, Yāgjnyavalkya came there and said "O! Guru! This is not a big problem. I will take the sin from you. Using my knowledge, I can easily save myself from it." Vaiṣampāyana became angry at what he considered an overly arrogant response and said "Why do you speak with such unbecoming pride? You are unfit to remain here. Go away. The knowledge I had imparted to you will remain here with me." Yāgjnyavalkya left (*threw up*) all the knowledge he had gained from Vaiṣampāyana and went away. He then prayed to Sūrya (*the Sun God*) who came in the form of a horse and taught him the pure Yajur Vēda and all the Yajus (*sacrificial prayers*).

Yāgjnyavalkya had two wives, Maitrēyi and Kātyāyani. Intending to break with family ties and go to Tapōvana*, he offered to make arrangements for financial support of his wives. Maitrēyi said "However much money you give us, it is not permanent. Instead, teach us knowledge that will make us happy for ever." He taught them Brahma* Gjnāna (*knowledge of the Supreme Being*) and went to the forest. *Brahma Purāṇa*

**Yagjna Varāha** – Once upon a time, Lord Brahma directed Svārōchisha Manu* to propagate the human species and rule the earth. At the time, earth was in the Rasātala (*a netherworld*), immersed in water. Manu asked Brahma "Where would they stand?" Wondering what should be done to correct the situation, Brahma performed Tapas* directed towards Lord Vishṇu. A being

the size of a thumb fell from Brahma's nostril and instantly grew to the size of an elephant, in the form of a Varāha (*boar*). The boar dove under water and lifted the earth out of the water up on its snout. *Bhāgavata*

**Yāji** – A Brahmin. His younger brother was Upayāji. King Drupada, needing a son who could destroy his arch-enemy Drōṇa (See **Arjuna**), came to Upayāji and said, "Sir, I will give you one hundred thousand cattle. Be the priest at my Putra Kāmēshṭi Yāga*." Upayāji told him, "I do not seek a reward. Go and get your wish from someone who does." Drupada would not accept his refusal and continued to respectfully serve him for a year. Upayāji told King Drupada, "My brother took a fruit that fell in a place which could not be confirmed to be clean; someone desirous of reward does not care about any bad side-effects of that reward. Go ask him to be the priest at your Yāga." Drupada obtained Yāji as the priest who then convinced his brother Upayāji to join him for Drupada's Yāga. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Yaksha** – A man named Yaksha wished to marry a girl named Kratusthala. But she did not accept his proposal. She had fallen in love with a Gandharva* named Vasuruchi. Getting wind of this, Yaksha assumed the form of Vasuruchi and approached the girl. Fooled by his disguise, Kratusthala married him. A son was born to them and was named Rajatanābha. Some time later, Yaksha resumed his own form. Kratusthala, even though upset at his deception, felt helpless to do anything and continued her life as his wife (*probably an allegorical tale to teach that marriage is a sacred bond*). *Brahma Purāṇa*

**Yakshapraṣnas** – (*Sanskrit for the 'Yaksha's questions'*) As the Pāṇḍavas were close to completing the twelve-year Araṇyavāsa (*forest-dwelling portion of their exile*), a Brahmin came to Dharmarāja and requested him to retrieve his kindling (*for fire used in religious rituals*) that an animal was carrying away. Dharmarāja and his brothers went after the animal, which, after leading them to a distant location, disappeared. The brothers were exhausted by the chase. Dharmarāja sent Nakula to see if there was a source of drinking water for them to slake their thirst. Nakula found a pond and was about to enter the pond when a disembodied voice said "This pond is mine. If you wish to drink water from it, you must first answer my questions correctly." Nakula ignored the voice and drank some water from the pond. He immediately fell unconscious to the ground. When Nakula did not return after a long time, Dharmarāja sent Sahadēva. The same thing happened to him. He then sent Arjuna and then Bhīma. None of the four returned. Overwhelmed by sorrow at the turn of events, Dharmarāja himself went looking for his brothers. The disembodied voice spoke again: "I am a crane. This pond belongs to me. If you wish to drink water from it, you first have to answer my questions. These men ignored my warning and are lying here unconscious." Dharmarāja replied "You cannot be a crane. You must be a great person. A crane cannot cause my brothers to lose consciousness." Dharmarāja then heard "I am not a crane. I am a Yaksha (*semi-divine beings with many magical powers*)." The Yaksha then materialized with a fierce appearance by the side of the pond and said "Anyone who drinks from this pond without answering my questions will die." Dharmarāja said "I will answer

to the best of my ability." The Yaksha asked "What makes Sūrya (*the Sun God*) go around? What supports Him? How does a man gain cooperation? How does a man become wise? Who are the living dead? What does not close its eyes even when asleep? What has no consciousness even though alive? What should a man abandon in order to become universally well-liked and free of grief? What should one abandon in order to become wealthy?" Dharmarāja's answers to all the questions pleased the Yaksha who said "I will bring back to life one of your brothers. Choose one." Dharmarāja chose Nakula, saying "Since I am alive and I am a son of Kunti, I request that one of the sons of Mādri be revived. So, please bring Nakula back to life." The Yaksha was pleased by the fairness of Dharmarāja's logic and brought all four of his brothers back to life. Then the Yaksha said "I am Yama Dharmarāja (*the God of Death*). I assumed this form and created the illusions of the animal and the Brahmin to test you. You have now completed the Araṇyavāsa portion of your exile and as you start the Agjnātavāsa (*incognito*) year, you will be able to assume any forms you wish and will not be recognised by anyone", and disappeared. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Yama** – Husband of Yami. One of the eight Dikpālakas*, in charge of the south. He is the son of Sūrya (*the Sun God*) and his wife Sangjna. Unable to withstand the brilliance of Sūrya, his wife left her Chhāya (*shadow*) in her place and went back to her parents. Yama and Chhāya did not get along well. Angered by his perception that she was ignoring him and tending only to her children, he kicked her. She gave him a Ṣāpa* that the leg with which he kicked her will be broken and fall to the earth. He told

his father (*Sūrya*) about the Ṣāpa. Sūrya amended the Ṣāpa so that only pieces of flesh from his leg will fall off and will be useful to earthly insects as food. Yama acquired the title of Dharma (*righteousness*) by being its protector. His adherence to Dharma made it possible for him to become the ruler of Pitṛ Lōka (*the world in which the souls of the dead spend the afterlife*). *Mārkanḍēya Purāṇa; Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

Yama had wives named Dhūmōrṇa and Vijaya. Chitragupta (*he maintains the karmic accounts of all souls, tallying the sins and the good deeds or Puṇya**), Lēkhari, Chanḍa and Mahāchanḍa were his assistants. Yama was fond of the Vaṭa (*Indian fig*) tree. Dharmarāja was Yama's son by Kunti.

Once upon a time, while a Muni named Mānḍavya was performing Tapas*, a king's soldiers chasing some thieves saw him and took him to the king and told him that he was the thief. The king had the Muni punished by being impaled on a wooden stake. On his death, he went to the city of Yama (*where sinners are punished*) and questioned Yama "Why did you decree such a punishment for me?" Yama told him "When you were a boy, you killed butterflies. That sin resulted in your suffering the same fate." Angry with the disproportionate punishment for a minor transgression, Mānḍavya gave Yama a Ṣāpa that he would be born as a mortal to a woman of the Ṣūdra* caste. As a result, Yama was born as Vidura (*Sage Vyāsa's son by Ambika's maidservant sent by Ambika, when her mother-in-law wanted her to have another child after the first one turned out to be congenitally blind*). *Bhāgavata*

When the time came for Lord Vishṇu's Avatāra as Rāma to end, Yama went to Him disguised as a Brahmin and sought to speak

with Him secretly. He got Rāma to agree to decapitate anyone who intruded while they were engaged in their conversation. He told Rāma "You are an incarnation of Lord Vishṇu. It has been a long time since You left heaven. You shall soon return to heaven." As he was talking to Rāma, Lakshmaṇa entered the room. Yama instantly vanished. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Yami** – Wife of Yama (*the God of Death*). She and Yama were the Ādi Dampati (*first married couple*). *Vishṇu Purāṇa*

**Yamuna** – Daughter of Sūrya (*the Sun God*). She took the form of a flowing river (*in the Purāṇas, rivers are anthropomorphed into women*). Once, Balarāma (*Lord Kṛshṇa's older brother*), while visiting family, went to the river along with Gōpikas (*female cowherds*) to bathe. He called out to Yamuna. When she did not respond, he dipped his Halam (*plough*) in the water and threatened to split her apart. A scared Yamuna took a human female form and gave Balarāma diamonds and other precious stones and returned to her normal form. The river water became white from then on. *Bhāgavata*

**Yaṣōda** – Lord Kṛshṇa's foster mother. Female cowherd. In a previous life, she was Dhara, wife of Drōṇa (*one of the eight Vasus, not the Guru of the Kauravas*). *Bhāgavata*

**Yaṣōdhara** – Wife of Hasti and mother of Vikunṭhana. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Yaṣōmati** – (*also known as Yaṣōvati*) Female companion of Ekāvaḷi. When an Asura*, Kālakētu, abducted Ekāvaḷi and took her to Pātāḷa (*netherworld*), Yaṣōmati accompanied her. Kālakētu tried to get Yaṣōmati to persuade Ekāvaḷi to marry him. Yaṣōmati

prayed to Dēvi instead, who appeared and told her that Hayahaya would come and release Ekāvaḷi from the Asura's prison. Hayahaya did not come for some time and Yaṣōmati sat on the banks of the Ganga river crying. Hearing her cries, Hayahaya approached her and inquired as to the cause of her grief. When she said she was crying because Hayahaya had not come as promised by Dēvi, Hayahaya identified himself. She then took him to Kālakētu. Hayahaya killed Kālakētu and rescued Yaṣōmati and Ekāvaḷi. *Dēvī Bhāgavata*

**Yati** – Son of Nahusha and brother of Yayāti. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Yaudhēya** – Son of Dharmarāja and his wife Dēvika (*each of the Pānḍavas had at least one wife he did not share with his brothers, in addition to Draupadi, shared by all five*). *Bhagavata*

**Yauvanāṣva I** – Son of Ambarīsha, who was adopted by Yuvanāṣva as his son. His son was Hārīta. Brahmins of Māndhāta Gōtra (*descendants of Māndhāta*) announce themselves as from the Pravara (*lineage*) of Ambarīsha, Yauvanāṣva and Hārīta. *Bhāgavata*

**Yauvanāṣva II** – King of the city of Bhadrāvati. Dharmarāja, having learnt that Yauvanāṣva had a horse that was suitable for use in a Yāga, sent his brother Bhīma to bring the horse. His grandson (*son of Ghaṭōtkacha*) Mēghavarṇa accompanied Bhīma, and using Asura* magic, stole the horse. Yauvanāṣva, learning of the theft of his horse, attacked and defeated Mēghavarṇa as well as his aide Vṛshakētu (*son of Karṇa*). Then Bhīma came and defeated the king. While Yauvanāṣva was unconscious, his son Suvēga arrived on the scene and joined the fight. Vṛshakētu, on regaining

consciousness, saw Yauvanāṣva and Mēghavarṇa lying dead and prayed that these brave men be brought back to life. When they were revived, he made peace between them. Yauvanāṣva, learning that it was Bhīma who came seeking a horse suitable for Dharmarāja's Yāga, gave them the horse and much wealth. He went to the Yāga, accompanied by his queen, Prabhāvati. *Jaimini Bhārata*

**Yavanāṣva** – Son of Chandra (*different from the Moon God*), who was the son of Viṣvagandha. His son was Savasta. *Bhāgavata*

**Yayāti I** – A king of the Chandra (*lunar; one of the two major royal lineages, the other being Sūrya, or solar*) dynasty. Son of Nahusha and his wife Priyamvada. One day, while out hunting, he heard a female crying from the bottom of a well. On rescuing her, he learnt that she was the daughter of Ṣukra (*the Guru of the Asuras*), and her name was Dēvayāni. Some time later, while strolling in a garden with her retinue which included a servant named Ṣarmishṭa (*daughter of the king in whose employ Ṣukra was the Guru; the king made his daughter become a servant as the condition for the Guru to remain in his kingdom*), Dēvayāni saw Yayāti again and fell in love with him. She asked him to formally marry her, saying they were already practically married because he held her right hand while rescuing her from the well. He responded that it would be improper for him to marry her because she was a Brahmin and he was a Kshatriya (*the hierarchy was Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaiṣya, and Ṣūdra; the protocol was that a man from one caste can marry a woman from his own or any lower caste but not a woman of a higher caste than his*). Unwilling to give up her love, she explained the problem to her

father, who granted an exemption and allowed the marriage. Yayāti took Dēvayāni's servant Ṣarmishṭa along with his wife to his city and put Ṣarmishṭa in a separate palace. Two sons were born to Dēvayāni and were named Yadu and Turvasu. Ṣarmishṭa requested Yayāti to give sons to her as well and Yayāti acceded to her request. As a result, three sons were born to her and were named Druhyu, Anu, and Pūru. Dēvayāni left Yayāti and and went back to her father on learning of his infidelity. She complained to her father about her humiliation by her husband sleeping with her servant. Out of love for his daughter, Ṣukra gave his son-in-law a Ṣāpa* that he would suffer from premature old age. Yayāti begged his father-in-law's forgiveness and pleaded that he was only avoiding the sin of failing to inseminate a wife who was in her fertile phase and that it would have been equivalent to abortion (*in Sanskrit, Bhrūṇa Hatya, literally "murder of a future person". Seems Ṣukra must have momentarily forgotten that Yayāti was not, in fact, Ṣarmishṭa's husband*). Ṣukra amended his Ṣāpa by allowing that if one of Yayāti's sons accepts old age in his place (*in essence, a transfer of the Ṣāpa*), Yayāti would remain youthful. Yayāti summoned all his sons and explaining that he would like to continue to enjoy youthful pleasures and asked that one of them accept premature aging in his place. All his sons declined the transfer of the Ṣāpa. Disappointed and angry with them all, Yayāti gave them Ṣāpas that Yadu's descendants (*Yādavas, of whom Kṛshṇa was the greatest*) will be ineligible to be kings; that the descendants of Turvasu will be devoid of a sense of right and wrong and will rule over tribes of cruel hunters; the descendants of Druhyu will rule a country afflicted with calamity and that the

descendants of Anu will die young. Then, he summoned his youngest son, Pūru and asked him again if he would accept old age in his stead. Pūru agreed and Yayāti remained youthful and enjoyed all the pleasures of life for a very long time. He rewarded Pūru by eventually choosing him as the heir to the throne.

Indra* struck up a friendship with Yayāti and presented a special chariot to him. Yayāti rode that chariot while waging war and defeating many rival kings. He thereby acquired the title of "Mahārathi" *("Great charioteer"*).

After living it up for a long time, he exchanged his youth for his son's old age. He crowned the now youthful Pūru the new king. He then retired to the forest, attained a place in Brahma Lōka and Dēva Lōka (*world of the Gods or heaven*) by performing severe Tapas*. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Yayāti II** – King of the city of Pratishṭhāna. He had a daughter named Mādhavi. Once Garutmanta* and a Muni named Gālava came to him and asked him to give them white horses with one blue ear, if he had any. He did not have horses of that description. He gave them his daughter instead and asked them to obtain the horses they wanted from some king, giving the king his daughter in return (*she had a boon that even after bearing children, she will remain a virgin*). *Mahā Bhārata*

**Yōgasiddhi** – Daughter of Angirasa. Younger sister of Bṛhaspati (*the Guru of the Dēvas*). Wife of the Vasu named Prabhāsa. Their son was Viṣvakarma (*the architect to the Dēvas*). *Bhāgavata*

**Yudhājit** – Son of the king of Kēkaya. Maternal uncle of Bharata (*Lord Rāma's younger brother, son of Kaikēyi who was*

*instrumental in exiling Rāma to the forest for twelve years*). After Rāma completed the Aṣvamēdha Yāga*, Yudhājit requested Rāma to give the Sindhu (*present-day Indus valley*) to Bharata. Rāma did as requested. *Rāmāyaṇa*

**Yudhāmanyu** – Son of King Drupada. Aṣvatthāma killed him while he was sleeping in the field tent of the Pānḍavas. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Yugandhara** – Minister in the Sabha (*court*) of King Vatsa. *Varāha Purāṇa*

**Yuvakētu** – A Rājarshi (*royal Sage*). One day, his semen fell in a body of water. A virgin girl drank the water and became pregnant. *Brahmānḍa Purāṇa*

**Yuvanāṣva** – Son of Prasēnajit. Childless for a very long time, he abdicated his throne and wishing for a son, went to the forest and became a disciple of Sage Bhṛgu. Sage Bhṛgu had Yuvanāṣva perform a Putra Kāmēshṭi Yāga*, gave the Yāga Phala (*holy water*) and asked him to keep it secure. Yuvanāṣva was very thirsty that night (*Yāgas are performed in front of a fire*) but could not find drinking water or someone to fetch him some water. He drank the holy water Sage Bhṛgu entrusted to him. The next morning the Sage looked for the holy water and did not find it where it was secured. He asked Yuvanāṣva what happened to the water. Yuvanāṣva said he drank it. The Sage said "The water was intended for your wives. The power of the water cannot be avoided. You will become pregnant." A Tējasvi (*one possessing Tējas**) boy came out of his stomach, splitting it open (*without harming him*). Indra* came there and gave the baby his finger to

suckle. The boy was named Māndhāta. Yuvanāṣva adopted his own grandson, Māndhāta's eldest son, as his son. *Mahā Bhārata*

**Yuyutsu** – Son of emperor Dhṛtarāshṭra by a woman of the Vaiṣya* caste. Before the start of the Mahā Bhārata war, Dharmarāja saluted with a Namaskāra* the Kaurava elders such as Bhīshma assembled on the battlefield and announced that any kings wishing to join forces with the Pāṇḍavas should do so right then. Yuyutsu went over and joined the Pāṇḍavas. He was the only son of Dhṛtarāshṭra who survived the war. *Mahā Bhārata*

# Appendix

**Explanations of Frequently Used Terms** (Where they occur in the text, marked with an * on first appearance within a story)

Ākāṣavāṇi (disembodied voice from the sky; an Oracle)

Amṛtam (literally non-death; the nectar that makes anyone who drinks it immortal)

Antahpura (innermost suites inside palaces)

Apsara (beautiful, talented divine nymph; a courtesan in Indra Sabha)

Asura (demons with magical powers including shape-shifting and invisibility; descendants of Diti, known also as Daityas and Rākshasas)

Aṣvamēdha Yāga (literally, horse sacrifice, in which a horse is let loose and the ruler of any kingdom the horse enters has to either fight the representatives of the performer of the Yāga or accept him as an overlord and pay tribute)

Brahma (Brahma is both a generic term for the Supreme Being as well as for the member of the Trinity, or Trimūrti, in charge of creation)

Budha (son of Chandra, the Moon God and Tāra, wife of Bṛhaspati; not to be confused with the Buddha)

Chakra (Sanskrit for ‘wheel’, a serrated disc that infallibly completes the mission on which Vishṇu sends it and returns to Him)

Danḍaka (covers parts of Chattisghar, Odesha, and Andhra Pradesh states)

Dikpālakas (the rulers of the eight directions – North, Northeast, East, Southeast, South, Southwest, West, Northwest)

Divya Dṛshṭi or Yōga Dṛshṭi (Divine sight, knowledge of past, present and future)

Gandharva (semi-divine beings with special magical powers)

Gāndharva (without priest, parents or witnesses. The man says “I marry you”, and it is up to him to remain true to his word)

Garutmanta (Garuḍa, a giant, articulate bird which is Lord Vishṇu’s aerial transport)

Guru Dakshiṇa (tradition was that instead of a fee, the Guru would ask each of his “graduating” students for something that the pupil might be specially capable of doing)

Havya (fruit of Yāgas, food for the Dēvas)

Hōma (ritual sacrifice using holy fire)

Indra (the ruler of Heaven, is not an individual; it is a position which can be acquired by great Tapas or Yāgas)

Kamanḍala (a vessel with a spout used in religious ceremonies)

Kāṣi (present-day Benares; also known as Vāraṇāsi)

Kshētraja (when a couple, especially a king and queen, cannot have children, a practice of the husband directing the wife to be impregnated by another man, was allowed; such children, called Kshētraja, could inherit the wealth or throne of their mother’s husband)

Lanka (considered to be today's Śrī Lanka, which used to be Ceylon)

Linga (phallic symbol, the only form in which Lord Śiva is always worshipped)

Manu (each epoch is characterized by a different Manu, appointed by Lord Brahma to propagate the species and be the law-giver)

Maya (sculptor and architect to the Asuras)

Mukti (salvation, release from the cycle of birth and death)

Nāga (an articulate serpent species with their own subterranean world, Nāga Lōka; they have the ability to assume human form)

Namaskāra (respectful greeting with palms together in front of one's chest)

Pativrata (a devoted and virtuous wife; being a Pativrata bestowed special powers on otherwise unremarkable women)

Prajāpati (ruler or protector of people, created by Brahma to propagate the species)

Prāyōpavēṣam or Prāyōpavishṭa (abstaining from food and sitting awaiting death)

Puṇya (the proactive opposite of sin. It means not just avoiding sinful actions but actively doing good works, a unique concept in Hindu Dharma. Beneficial Karma)

Putra Kāmēshṭi Yāga (a sacrifice with the specific objective of begetting a son; a divine entity emerges from the sacred fire and presents a pot of rice pudding or sacred water, called the Yāga Phala to the performer, who gives it to his wife/wives; pregnancy occurs to whoever consumes it)

Rājasūya Yāga (performed by confident, powerful kings or emperors to establish a dominant status among rulers by

defeating any that do not agree to be subservient and make them pay homage and tribute)

Ṛtvija (priest who officiates at Yāgas, i.e., religious rituals involving animal sacrifice)

Samhita (the real continuous text of the Vēda as formed out of the Padas or separate words by proper phonetic changes)

Ṣāpa (generally translated into English as a curse; however a Ṣāpa is much more than a mere curse. A curse expresses a person's feelings or a wish that something bad would happen to another. A Ṣāpa makes bad things happen; it cannot be reversed or canceled. Release from its effects can be determined only by the person who gave the Ṣāpa)

Saptarshis (seven divine Sages who can be seen in the sky as celestial objects)

Ṣaraṇu (promise of absolute protection from danger from any quarter to the point of dying for the cause)

Sthala Purāṇa (the tale of a specific place, either a Temple or some other Pilgrimage site)

Ṣūdra (the fourth and lowest in the caste hierarchy; Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaiṣyas, in that order, are all higher. They were generally not educated and performed manual labor)

Swayamvara (a public meeting of invited kings and princes from among whom an unmarried girl chooses her husband-to-be; sometimes she has to accept the winner of a contest, e.g., Draupadi, Sīta)

Tapas (often translated into English as Meditation; however the old concept of Tapas is much more spiritual and powerful than the concept of meditation as understood today. One big difference

was that it was usually continued until the Deity who was the object of the Tapas appeared and granted a boon or boons)

Tapōvana (a forest that was safe and secure for the performance of Tapas)

Tējas (Sanskrit word with many meanings, including ‘heat’, ‘light’, ‘beauty’, ‘dignity’, ‘power’, ‘spirit’, ‘essence’; actual meaning is context-dependent)

Tīrtha (a place of holy pilgrimage)

Upanayanam (religious ceremony in which Brahmin boys are taught the Gāyatri Mantra [whispered in the boy’s ear by his father] and a sacred thread is placed around his chest; the boy becomes a Brahmin or Dwija, meaning ‘twice-born’)

Vānara (Sanskrit for ‘human with tail’; articulate monkey)

Viṣvakarma (architect and sculptor to the Dēvas, son of Lord Brahma)

Vrata (a sequence of worship to a specific deity performed with strict compliance to a set series of steps)

Vyūha (Sanskrit, meaning ‘Maze’. Vyūha is an intricate military formation designed to ambush and isolate a feared enemy from his supporting forces. It took specialized knowledge on the part of a warrior to enter and exit such formations, of which the Padma or lotus-shaped formation was a specially difficult one to breach. Arjuna was the only warrior on the Pāṇḍavas’ side who had the ability to enter as well as break out of the maze).

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

It is hard enough for anyone other than a dedicated scholar to read all 18 cantos of the great epic *Mahābhārata* let alone the *Rāmāya?a, Bhāgavata* and the many *Purā?ās* as well. In view of this and particularly today's fast-paced life, this book presents the stories of characters from all the books of Hindu Mythology in a compact English version.

While reading a Telugu book titled '*Pūrva Gāthā Lahari ',* the author was surprised to discover many fascinating stories and substories even in books with which he was quite familiar. He was so impressed that he decided to make the stories accessible to a wider audience of Indians as well as the Indian diaspora by writing an English version based on the Telugu book. A few examples of surprising details will illustrate the point:

- Several great warriors on the Kaurava side in the *Mahābhārata* war were known to be invincible to anyone in the Pān?ava forces. The means of making the greatest of them, Bhīshma disarm himself was devised several lifetimes earlier in

Brahma's court.

- The wife of Sage Atri was able to turn the Trimūrtis into infants, and another ordinary woman was able to stop the dawn of a new day due to the spiritual power from being Pativratas.
- Even Vish?u was not immune from accountability for His actions, facing hardships in one incarnation from ?āpas given to Him in a previous incarnation.

Whether one is inclined to read the whole book as a nonfiction narrative or use it as a reference to check particular stories, there is much here to savour.

One of the primary benefits of being raised in a household with a grandfather who was not only a professor of English Literature but a Sanskrit scholar as well was that the walls were decked with great works of literature. Making good use of this benefit, Surya Maruvada had read and loved the major books from which the stories in this book were extracted including the *Mahābhārata, Bhāgavata, Rāmāya?a and Dēvī Bhāgavata* in poetic versions during his teen years.

After emigrating to the USA and raising his children there, he wished there was something he could do because his children and their contemporaries could not enjoy the same access to these classic literary works that he had. Retiring from an engineering career at age 74, he found himself with a lot of time on his hands. With encouragement from his family, Surya set out to translate into English a book in Telugu titled *Pūrva Gāthā Lahari,* which had been a useful reference for him for decades. This book is the end product of his effort, aided and abetted by his children and two

nephews.

Surya lives in Maryland, USA with his wife and daughter.